May

The Black Cat

1918

Clever Short Stories

Olivette Bourgeois

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MAY 1918

Spring

10 CENTS

These City Physicians Explain Why They Prescribe Nuxated Iron

To Make Healthier Women and Stronger, Sturdier Men

NOW BEING USED BY OVER THREE MILLION PEOPLE ANNUALLY

By enriching the blood and creating thousands of new red blood cells, it often quickly transforms the flabby flesh, toneless tissues, and pallid cheeks of weak, anæmic men and women into a glow of health. Increases the strength of delicate, nervous run-down folks in two weeks' time in many instances.

IT is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen, that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron.

Extracts from some of the letters are given below:

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and Medical Author, says: "There can be no sturdy iron men without iron." Pallor means anaemia. Anaemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anaemic men and women is pale—the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"I have used Nuxated Iron widely in my own practice in most severe aggravated conditions with unfailing results. I have induced many other physicians to give it a trial, all of whom have given me most surprising reports in regard to its great power as a health and strength builder."

Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago and Former House Surgeon, Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, in commenting on the value of Nuxated Iron said: "This remedy has proven through my own tests of it to excel any remedy I have ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders. The manufacturers are to be congratulated in having given to the public a long felt want, a true tonic, supplying iron in an easily digested and assimilated form. A true health builder in every sense of the word."

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital said: "I have strongly emphasized the great necessity of physicians making blood examinations of their weak, anaemic, run-down patients. Thousands of persons go on year after year suffering from physical weakness and a highly nervous condition due to lack of sufficient iron in their red blood corpuscles, without ever realizing the real and true cause of their trouble. Without iron in your blood your food merely passes through the body, somewhat like corn through an old mill with rollers so wide apart that the mill can't grind.

"But in my opinion you can't make strong, vigorous, successful, sturdy iron men by feeding them on metallic iron. The forms of metallic iron must go through a semi-digestive process to transform them into organic iron — Nuxated Iron — before they are so ready to be taken up and assimilated by the human system.

"Notwithstanding all that has been said and written on the subject by well-known physicians, thousands of people still insist in dosing themselves with metallic iron simply. I suppose, because it costs a few cents less. I strongly advise readers in all cases, to get a physician's prescription for organic iron—Nuxated Iron—or if you don't want to go to this trouble then purchase only Nuxated Iron in its original packages and see that this particular name (Nuxated Iron) appears on the package. If you have taken preparations such as Nux and Iron and other similar iron products and failed to get results, remember that such products are an entirely different thing from Nuxated Iron."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary Nuxated iron three times per day for two weeks, then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended by physicians, is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed in this city by all good druggists.

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The Black Cat

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GERMAN
WAR PRACTICE
Destruction of the Library
of the University of Louvain

From an article in the London Times of November 4, 1915, by M. E. Durham, quoting Professor Leon Van der Essen, who had recently seen the librarian, Professor Delannoy, who went to the spot August 27, 1914, to see whether anything could be saved:

"The Germans did not penetrate the building, but contented themselves with smashing the main window looking on the Vieux Marche. Through that window they introduced some inflammable liquid and fired a few shots, causing an immediate explosion.
"On the night of Tuesday, the 25th, a father of the Josephite College, which is located a few yards from the spot where the Germans smashed the main window, called the attention of the commanding officer to the fact that the building he was going to destroy was the University Library. The officer replied, textually, 'Es ist Befehl!' [It is the order.] It was then 11 p.m. These are the facts."

That our own Universities and Libraries have not suffered the fate of *Louvain* is due to the unbroken line of our Allies. To secure to all people, great and small, self-government and the peaceful use of learning, the United States is at war.

SCHOLARS may help by saving now to buy Liberty Bonds for themselves and counselling others to do so.

LIBERTY LOAN COMMITTEE
Liberty Building, Boston

THE BLACK CAT CLUB

THE twenty-five dollar prize for the best story in the February number was divided between Griswold Wheeler, author of *The Squealer,* and Jean Mahan Plank, author of *Good News,* as their stories received the same number of votes. Prizes for criticisms were awarded to the following persons, in the order named: Miss Bessie Loesges, Riverside, Ills.; E. A. Kirkwood, San Francisco, Cal.; Willis Wisler, Millersville, Pa.; Francis J. Gillooley, Philadelphia, Pa.; Kay Kasser, New York, N. Y.; Miss Florence M. Pettee, Los Angeles, Cal.; Miss F. Pendleton, Cuba, N. Y.; Miss Ada L. Belew, Galva, Iowa; Mrs. Leora Tuttle, Spokane, Wash. Mr. Kirkwood is the author of *The Creditors' Meeting,* in this number. (See page 27.) Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest.

The Squealer is intensely human, if nothing else; and it is something else. It has atmosphere, compression, and speaks volumes for the author's insight and adherence to probability rather than mere possibility. It has certain inconsistencies, which, to do the author full justice, are not obstrusive except under direct analysis. The greatest weakness is the author's haste to assure the possibly squeamish reader that the hero is innocent. The endeavor to put this character's best foot foremost is based perhaps on the subconscious recognition of the old popular conception of prison as an instrument of revenge, not of reform. This tends to lessen rather than increase the sympathy for the convicted man. For an intelligent man, who has plenty of time to think and is supposed not to be a criminal, to espouse plans for a wholesale jail delivery, makes one fear that the author's trust was misplaced. The mere fact that Murray saw his betrothed being escourted through the prison yard by the warden is not strong enough to serve as a motive. The study of Carter is well done. The villainy of the warden, who is not so fiendish as to make the story fail to carry conviction, serves to belittle the protecting power of the state and throw sympathy on the side of the jail delivery. The revelation in the final paragraph is not convincing; if circumstances had been truly depicted, Murray would have been bound up for weeks in the red tape of the law machine, and his release would not have come unheralded. The reader cannot fail to admire the vigor and robustness both of thought and emotion which saturate the story throughout; but the very emotional vividness of both Murray and Carter stand in the way of a unified, single impression at the close. This lack of finality leaves a blurred impression, causing the reader to waver between the sacrifice of one and the heroism of the other.

Good News animates one's appetite and appeases one's hunger for something new. The situation is simple, the solution rather obvious; and from the plot standpoint its ambitions are modest. From the outset, the reader trembles for the fate of the "Fortnightly Good News" and its transplanted mentor, and while he is highly pleased he is not greatly impressed by their subsequent triumph. Miss Stanley is a pathetic and somewhat hackneyed individual whose presence helps to neutralize an otherwise decidedly unique story. True to nature is the indignation of the exploited altruists at being impeached before the public for their good deeds, and true to nature and refreshingly humorous is the idealist's dismay at being made to wear his own exalted garments. It is hard to believe that even the inexperienced editor of a new paper would neglect to review its entire contents before it went to press for the first time and it therefore seems hardly probable that an assistant would be able to slip some news in unnoticed. The Barnard incident is another detail that does not ring true. The idea of two men unblushingly establishing a gold note prayer credit with God at the possible expense of deserving competitors, coupled with the act of a maid in "papering" a bureau with a sheet which had barely time to arrive, borders on the melodramatic. The fact that it was finally thought expedient to refrain from publishing the names of persons concerned in the items contained in this remarkable periodical brings it within the limits of the realm of things that may be, even if it does not assure the merry jingle of the cash register. The "paragraph under Corrections" makes a clever but somewhat strained ending. Simply an announcement of the engagement of the editor and his assistant and of their intention of carrying on the work together might have been an improvement.

In Account With Old Glory is a logically planned story with a good title and a balanced, well developed plot. The old theme of the Southern feud is given a new twist. The appeal to the present feeling of patriotism makes the story timely. It is

(*Continued on page* 44)

THE WATCHERS OF THE WILD

By CHART PITT

From Ketchikan to the Naked Lands is no pleasure trip, viewed in perspective. But Vincent has the ghost of neglected duty prodding him on, and faces the pleasant prospect of wailing winds and stormy waters and the horrible result of his tardiness.

ARTHUR Vincent shivered at the call of the lonely wind. He turned his face toward the window, to shut out the sight of a pile of letters upon his desk. Each of those letters contained a sharp-toothed reproach, from the head office in Boston, imperative orders to investigate conditions at the various cannery-stations of the company, and relieve the distress of the men who watched the company property, at the lonely posts scattered along the storm-scourged Alaska coast.

The gasoline-schooner Fish Queen was at his disposal for this purpose. He could see her yellow mast-heads rocking back and forth across his line of vision, as she rolled under the heave of the flood-tide sweeping up Tongass Narrows.

The memory of a few days spent upon that unstable schooner, in the quieter days of the autumn, filled him with dread of what must come to pass upon the morrow; for there was no such a thing as ignoring those last orders from Boston.

When he came to Ketchikan, as superintendent for the Boston company, he thought he had been cast away at the end of the world. He soon learned that there were worse places farther along the northland trail.

He could not shut out the sound of the lonely, winter wind or banish the picture of the Fish Queen rolling in the trough of a stormy sea. Neither could he banish that pile of letters upon the desk. So he searched hurriedly in his vest-pocket. His nervous fingers closed over a little, black syringe. He rolled up his sleeve, and finding a spot on his fore-arm, not already ornamented with a little blue blotch, thrust in the point and added a little lubricant to his razor-edged nerves.

In a few moments the drug began to work, and the sob of the wind lost something of its menace, and the mastheads of the Fish Queen rocked less defiantly across the square of the window. In his new-found bravery, he even looked the situation fairly in the face.

There was the Lone-tree station, where a man and a woman had been left to watch the cannery. The man had died soon after the cannery-crew left. Of all the places needing help, this was perhaps the easiest to reach.

The Storm Coast station had been flying a distress signal for weeks. What their trouble was, no one knew. For the sea swept in among the lance-tooth rocks, making a winter-landing difficult even in good weather—and good weather was rare along the Storm Coast.

Then there was the Naked Lands, in the wash of the Bering Sea. Fire had destroyed the store early in the autumn. Provisions should have been landed long ago; but they were far away, and the company would hear no more concerning their troubles, before spring—if ever.

Arthur Vincent had been a gentleman-gambler before he found a place with the fish company. In those days when he risked his fortune upon chance, he had been a firm believer in luck. He religiously lived up to the rules of the game as he knew them. One rule was, that every man was entitled to his chance. Only once had he broken the rules of the game, to hand back the yellow coin to a man who had lost heavily. But the unfortunate player had thrown the gold in his face, and

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stalked out into the night; then Arthur Vincent forsook the cards and turned to more honorable pursuits. So now something from the olden days made him feel that each of the stations that was in urgent need, must have its honest chance.

He made out a slip for each of the stations, and placed them in his hat, and proceeded upon the mystic way of the raffle. He reached into the hat, and chose a piece of paper, opening it with shaking fingers. "Naked Land" was written across its face.

The voice of the wind rose in gloating measures—even the mystic fingers of the "dope" could not stifle its sinister song. He shivered as he gazed at that hated name upon the scrap of paper, but he dare not question the mandates of the raffle. The die had been cast, and he must follow to the end of the horror-trail.

He was a land-lubber, and a stranger to that land of fog and stubborn coasts; but the ill-fame of the Naked Lands had travelled far afield. He knew what he would find, after the Fish Queen had battled with the endless miles of stormy water. It would be nothing but the cannery buildings, hugging the side of a wind-whipped hill. There the summer sands drifted like the dunes of the desert, and the winter snows whirled about the hapless buildings, or mounted in great drifts upon the inclined hill-top. There they would creep along like the march of a glacier, to break off in great masses, crushing everything beneath their fall.

That was the God-forsaken spot, out there on the lonely Aleutians, that the raffle-card had ordered him to visit. But he had taken his chance, and lost; now the watchers of the Naked Lands must have their chance. So he brought out the little black syringe again.

The Fish Queen crept along in the shelter of the islands as long as possible, then she breasted the tides of Summer Straits, and stood out to sea.

The farther west they wormed their way, the more winds they met, and the worse the Fish Queen wallowed in the green combers.

There was no rest for Vincent. Day and night the agony went on. There came a time when he did not care whether he lived or died; but he wanted a solid piece of earth beneath him, even to die on.

But at last the bald headland poked its nose up out of the sea, and the Naked Land station crept slowly into view.

As they hove-to before the landing, they sounded the whistle; but there was no sign of life upon the beach. A feeling of impending disaster crept into the heart of Arthur Vincent. Had he ignored the last appeal of dying men?

The surf was pounding upon the beach, and an hour was consumed in the landing. At last he clambered up the beach, wet with the flying spray and shivering under the lash of the wind that drifted down from the ice-fields that guard the pole.

A thin thread of smoke crept out from one of the chimneys. For a moment the dope-fiend forgot the maddening surf that tumbled between him and the Fish Queen —forgot the snow-fields that were worming their way down the inclined hill-top—forgot the wilderness of water that pitched and tumbled across the miles, venting its wrath on the outer ice-pack amid the mad grinding of the floes. That thin thread of smoke, curling above the chimney, spoke of life. He would not be obliged to report that the silent-lipped watchers who guarded the company's interests in the Naked Lands, had been left to starve upon that lonely, God-forsaken coast.

With trembling fingers, he opened the door. His anxious eyes took in the room at a glance. A short, fleshy man floundered upon the blankets of the bed—babbling in aimless delirium. The other watcher was nowhere to be found. The cloudy fabric of the man's delirium held much about "When Billy returns from the hill."

"It is all right," said the mate of the Fish Queen. Billy is the other watchman. Mike is too fat to hunt, but the other fellow runs around the hills like an Indian.

"Billy will be all right. He has had plenty of exercise and fresh air. Mike has had neither, and he has lived on whatever Billy has brought from the hills.

"I just came from the kitchen. There is nothing in there but the bones of a

caribou, with a few shreds of black meat clinging to them. Perhaps the weather has been bad of late, so Billy couldn't hunt."

Out of the desolation of the famished camp, one star gleamed—one hope that clamored to the throbbing brain of Vincent above the babbling of the watcher's delirium. The man must be saved, and the nearest doctor was at Dutch Harbor, a day's sail for the Fish Queen. He gave orders for the supplies to be landed upon the beach, and the sick man hurried to the doctor. The mate inquired if he was not going with them. Something of his old-time dignity returned to him, as he answered.

"No sir. I will remain and look after things till the other watchman returns."

His pride forbade him telling the truth—that his nerves would not stand any more hog-wallowing, such as he had endured since leaving Ketchikan. He helped them put the sick man in the boat, and waved them a farewell from the beach. He watched them battle with the surf, with a sigh of satisfaction. He stamped the rocks beneath his feet, to make sure they were not a delusion. He watched them swing the boat up over the rail, and the Fish Queen stood out to sea. He did not think of returning to the house, till the schooner had vanished in the haze that clung to the edge of the maddened sea.

Before he reached the house, he remembered that he was hungry. His stomach had settled a little and was clamoring for food after its long fast. So he turned once more to the beach. He walked along mechanically, with the din of the surf in his ears, till a wave broke over his feet. He sprang back in alarm, and looked about for the supplies.

The beach upon which they had been landed was buried deep beneath the boiling surf. A few boxes tossed about in the breakers. He caught up a piece of driftwood and plunged madly at any floating object that he thought might belong to the lost supplies. He soon realized that they had been caught in the back-wash and whirled out to sea. The board fell from his nerveless fingers and drifted away in the surf. He searched in his pocket for the black syringe. Once—twice—thrice, he thrust it into his numbed arm—then he flung it far out into the water. The syringe was empty. He walked back to the house, cursing like a mad-man.

He piled more coal in the kitchen range, and huddled over it, thinking. That was all there was left for him to do. He watched for Billy to return from the hills. Every little sound brought him to the window. Sometimes it was the surf. At other times it was the wailing of the wind in the hills, or the call of some animal strange to his ear.

Thus the bleak winter day wore away. He lighted the lamp, and waited for the return of the man, upon whom he had heaped so much unnecessary hardship.

It was well into the night when he heard Billy coming. The first sound that broke through the wailing of the wind, was his cursing. It was plain that he had brooded long and deeply over the superintendent who had sat in his office at Ketchikan, while he had been forced to gather his living from the bleak, wind-whipped hill. The superintendent's name was upon his lips, coupled with a frightful oath, as he opened the door and stepped into the glare of the light.

For a minute the light blinded him, then he saw the stranger beside the fire. He trailed off into a mad-man's laugh, advancing with cautious, menacing tread. The hind-quarters of a caribou slipped from his shoulders to the floor.

"So you have come at last, have you?" he sneered. "For weeks I have waited for you—but I knew you would come some day—they always do."

The lamplight fell full upon his lean, savage face. The heart of Arthur Vincent went cold with dread.

"Sometimes, as I lay awake waiting for you, the winds up there on the hill told me you would never come." The watchman chuckled, as the fire flared brighter in his eyes. "But I knew they lied, and I cursed them, till Mike threatened to shoot me.

"Then sometimes they told me that you would come and starve with me. Then I saw your bones rattling about under your skin, and my hungry heart sang with joy.

And so you have come. Who are you? Why don't you talk?"

Vincent was deep in the grip of fear. He lied cheerfully.

"I am a man they sent out to help you. They left the provisions on the beach, and went to Dutch Harbor with Mike."

"They left provisions—where are they?"

His threatening poise dropped away from him. Something that had once been a smile worked its way across the almost-naked bones of his face.

"The tide came up and got them," the dope-fiend admitted weakly. Then he was sorry he had spoken. A furious fire blazed in the mad-man's eyes, and his voice drowned the wailing of the wind.

"You lazy loafer, you let the tide get the good things that came all the way from Ketchikan. Well, you must starve, then. I hunted for Mike, because he was sick and fat, but I won't hunt for no lobster that lets the grub go out to sea.

"Yes, you will starve. No tenderfoot can get his living in these hills. For a few days you will eat snails on the beach—then you will get too weak to get even them—and then I will let the eagles come in to watch you die.

"When you are dead I will drag you out on the hill ,and they can have what little meat is left on you—first they will take your eyes. Old Baldy and his mate are going to have your eyes—I promised them they could have your eyes. I will keep the other eagles away, while they are getting the eyes. My, but they would have been disappointed if you had happened to be a one-eyed man!

"I am sorry you won't be able to hear the little red foxes quarrelling over your choicest bones. After a while there will be nothing left of you but a white skull, that will gleam in the moonlight like a ghost.

"The night-wind will sob through your bleached skull, and I shall be happy. My God, I can hear the winds sobbing now—they are hungry for your bones! Perhaps they will get mad at me, those awful winds, if I make them wait till you starve to death.

"Perhaps I ought to kill you now. I will listen and see what they are saying—see if they want you now. You be quiet over there, or I can't hear.

"No. They have gone away again; but they will return—they always do. But it doesn't matter, that is always the end. Those who come to the Naked Lands always lay their bones out there on the hill. After a while there will be a whole band of white harps.

"I wonder what kind of sound your skull will make. Mike's will be either a baritone or a bass, his head is so large. I think your long, thin head will be the fife in the band. One night they told me to hurry up and die, as they needed a flute for their band."

Then the pangs of hunger overcame the vagaries of his diseased brain. But they only sharpened his hate for the man who had let the supplies go out to sea.

He cut a heaping plate of red steaks from the caribou. Soon the room was filled with the breath of frying meat. Never before had Vincent breathed such delightful odors. He was tortured by the growing fear that he would have no place at the feast.

He looked at the rifle in the corner, but his eyes returned to the long knife, which Billy handled so lovingly. Somehow he felt that the keen-bladed knife would be the thing that would end it all, when the whim of the mad watcher changed.

He could feel the ends of his violated nerves unravelling. He longed to shout, to leap, or sing—anything to relieve that silent agony. But he feared to make any demonstrations, for his life hung upon a slender thread.

He could hear the winds sobbing on the bleak hillside—the winds that told such horrible things to the mad watcher. He began to fancy that he, too, could understand their wild ravings. He fell to drawing a picture in the smoky gloom of the little room—a picture of a naked hill, where the weird moonlight fell upon something white, something that gleamed up from the sinister shadow of the sod, and mocked him with hollow eyes.

Now the wind began to whistle a tune through the fissures of that white thing

that gleamed from the shadows, began to add its voice to the wild medley of the night. God of the Naked Lands! It was the thin, soulful wailing of a fife!

Billy had said that his part in the orchestra of death would be a fife. It was his own skull that mocked him from the hillside. God have mercy—was he going mad himself?

He sprang to his feet, but the eye of the mad watcher was upon him, and the firelight gleamed red from the long blade of the knife. He felt the cold sweat gather upon his face, and he settled into his seat.

That hour, as the mad watcher feasted upon the caribou steaks, was the brother of other festal-hours that followed, while Arthur Vincent grew weaker and weaker upon his bed.

The third night he was awakened by the voice of Billy.

"No, I won't go—not to-night. I am comfortable here—wait till a warmer night. All you got to do is wail and wail and wail, out there on the hillside. You will have nothing to do but wail, for the next million years to come.

"Why must you be in such a hurry? I want to wait till that slim-headed fellow over there dies. I want to hear you whistle through his skull first.

"If you make me go to-night, I will have to kill him before I leave. And, besides, he seems sort of foolish—and who ever heard of killing a fool?

"Don't you need a fife more than a flute? Take the fool, and let me go back to sleep."

Then the mad watcher trailed off into a fiendish laugh.

The stricken man listened to the moaning of the wind on the hillside, trying to catch the sinister message that Billy had heard.

Then he heard it too, rising over the wailing of the lonely winds, clear and strong like an angel's voice calling from Paradise. It was the Fish Queen sounding the station-call.

For a moment the wild fires flared brighter in the eyes of the mad watcher—then he, too, understood. The light of reason mingled with a smile of recognition, as he advanced with proffered hand, through the yellow lamplight.

The features of the watcher were hidden beneath the tangled beard of the wilderness, but something in those eyes took Vincent back to yester-years—to a gaming-table, and his spurned gold.

"Mike should be here—and you should be on the other side of the earth. But Mike has gone, and you are here—I guess something has been snuffed out in the famine, something I had better not try to remember.

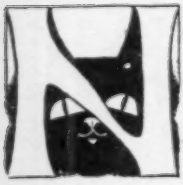
"That was a boat blowing for the station. We must get a light out on the beach. God, but listen to them awful winds! Didn't they get on your nerves, before you got used to them? They did on mine."

THE LAW OF THE WOLF, another story by *Chart Pitt*, will appear in the June number.

THE THREE HUSBANDS OF MAIZIE

By LEE PAPE

Mazie is a cute little ball and chain, but she isn't satisfied with one husband. So acting upon the suggestion of her worthy consort—or is it conscript?—she calls in a couple of extras, just to provide a slice of variety.



NOW that I look back in retrospect, as the saying is, the whole thing seems to have been a question of monotony. Mazie probably wouldn't have got right down to marrying me in the first place if she hadn't been bored helpless by a combination of social ennui and her Aunt Flavia. Her Aunt Flavia is the rich, billowy one suffering from aggravated enlargement of the morals. Once she heard one of Mazie's brothers distantly alluding to what a jolly thing it is for the perpetuation of the race that there happen to be two sexes, and she hasn't put him back in her will yet. It was Aunt Flavia's visit that tossed the last straw on Mazie's load of boredom. She'd been there a week with no sign of moving on, when Mazie's state of mind boiled over.

"Custard," she said to me—she calls me everything but my real, no-fault-of-mine name of Custer—"Custard, I'm desperate! The dances and bridges have all been as like each other as peanuts in a pocket, there's nothing new in the world, and Aunt Flavia is an abomination. I can stand anything except monotony. Give me variety or give me death. Custard, I want to elope—right away—this afternoon."

"Do you mean with me?" I asked her.

"Certainly with you," she says. "I wouldn't marry anybody but you, Cus dear."

Well, I was game. We'd been playing tennis at the club, and I'd had some lively sets and was pretty much all in, but I didn't let that stand in the way. I was simply nuts over Mazie, as crazy as I am now, even, and I figured that if I talked sense to her and stuck out for a regular wedding with presents and blessings, she might hold me off for years and years. Besides, I didn't want a regular wedding. I have a rotten time at other people's, so how would I feel at my own?

We gathered up Frank Jayne for best man and Emily Mays for best girl, shot down to city hall in my car, plucked a nice fresh license and began bowling along the streets with it looking for a church whose architecture suited Mazie's fancy. Finally we struck a cute brown one with a parsonage lolling against one side. We all hopped out and rang up the minister, and before you could say Tschaikowsky, Mazie and I were Mr. and Mrs. Man and Wife. It was no end exciting, the whole business, and it wasn't till it was all over that I took a squint down and realized I'd been married in tennis shoes. Emily Mays knows a whole army of old proverbs and jingles that tell you whether it's good luck of bad luck to be married this way and that way, but she couldn't seem to recollect anything about tennis shoes. She got off a clever thing, I remember, though—said it was apt to be good luck because of all the "loves" in tennis.

Well, we settled down, Mazie and I, in the coziest little apartment you ever saw, just our size—a perfect fit, everybody said. Mazie and I spent the first couple of months chasing about like hens on hot griddle cakes, or whatever it is they're so fond of chasing about on, hunting for oriental rugs and period furniture to feather our nest with. After that, several more months skidded by on the double-quick while we were taking honeymoon trips and getting used to things. All in all, it was about a year before Mazie had time to remember that perhaps there wasn't as

much variety coming her way as there might be.

"Cussie," she opened up at breakfast one morning, "doesn't it seem more or less weird to you to look across the table each breakfast and dinner time and see just me sitting here, *every* day?"

"It seems just exactly right, proper and fitting, all wool and a yard jolly," I told her.

And so it does, for there's nobody like Mazie, bless her, and never was and never will be, only I can't start in and tell you all the wonderful things about her, because if I did I'd get stuck at the very getaway and have to stop and begin quoting the poets, and that's no way to keep friends.

But Mazie made a face at her reflection in the back of her teaspoon and went on: "Well, of course, *you* used to have breakfast alone, and often dinner too, I dare say, but now with me, Custard, it was different. There was the whole family at breakfast, or other girls' families, when I'd go week-ending, and as for dinners, I suppose every man I ever knew has had me out for dinner. Luncheons remain about the same, of course, for I'm always meeting some of the girls downtown."

"But Mazie, look here," I wanted to know, "do you mean to say that as a husband you're beginning to find me not a perfect, all around institution?"

"Oh, Custard, not at all!" said Mazie, really shocked. "You *are!* I'm always wondering what on earth would have happened if I'd married anybody else. But Cus, you know how I crave variety—always have. And once or twice I've just got to thinking that although I wouldn't for the world want to look across and see anybody else sitting there, *instead* of you, yet if sometimes perhaps *you* could be somebody else, somehow—but that's nonsense, of course."

I thought quickly. I hate to think quickly, but I can when I have to. I decided I was up against what you might call a problem. And a problem's like a bull—take it firmly by the horns and something's bound to happen one way or the other.

"No, it's not," I said. "It's not nonsense. Mazie, we've come to a rocky place. It seems to me I've read about it in books or seen it in plays or something. And if we don't mind our p's and q's P. D. Q., we'll find ourselves bumping into one of those what d'y callums—partings of the ways. Mazie, this thing's a ghost that's risen between us, and it must be laid. You're right, Mazie, a woman's life is narrower than a man's, and as far as possible it ought to be made interesting and varied for her. Of course, I realize I'm nothing but a bunch of limitations—I can't be all things to you, like Mrs. Caesar's husband, or somebody, but Mazie, here's a thought. I said that idea of yours wasn't nonsense, didn't I? Well, it isn't. You know, I used to be half good at college theatricals. You've seen me behind the foots. Now you tell me what kind of husband you'd like tomorrow, for a change, and he'll be delivered first thing before breakfast."

"Oh, Custard!" Mazie chortles. "How perfectly pretty-but-odd! You must start in as a brute—a jealous brute!" And the dear girl went on to tell me that if I had a fault, it was that I was too trusting and thoughtful. As the old saying has it so neatly, I anticipated her every wish. Besides that, I was too sure of her, almost to the point of being conceited about it. It would be rather a thrilling change, Mazie thought, if I had a try at treating her as though she were a piece of furniture, a chair or something that didn't agree at all with my taste in furniture, but that I wouldn't hear for a second of anybody else trying to sit on.

"Right-o. Jealous brute starts it," I promised, and set the ball rolling before Mazie'd finished dressing for breakfast next morning. Mazie, dressed for breakfast, in a foamy kind of thingumbob with wide sleeves, and her hair piled up like a kid's, is really an inspiring sight and a perfect appetizer, but just now she was having some sort of misunderstanding with a hook or an eye or something, and she called to me to come in and be umpire.

"I'm busy," I growled.

"Well, how dare you be busy when I need you? Come a-running!"

No answer.

"Custard!"—loud pedal. And then all

of a sudden she remembered. "Oh, that! Well anyway, don't be a goop. Come in here and fix me."

"Stop your racket. Shut up. Go—bag your head." I ab-so-lute-ly wouldn't go help her out, and it ended with Mazie, in a beautiful temper, having to finish the job as best she could by herself. It was a big slice of variety for her, all right, and so it was when, after calling to me about a dozen times that breakfast was waiting, she finally sat down alone, and I showed about ten minutes later without a collar, and my hair over one eye, and a pretty fair growth of stickers on my face.

Mazie thoroughly enjoyed the shock, and almost swallowed her napkin laughing—until Priscilla floated in with buckwheat cakes. Mazie hadn't thought of Priscilla. Priscilla is one of those up-stage employees that you always count ten before giving instructions to. So you can picture the tableau. I felt that as an actor it was really my artistic duty to bawl at her and demand to know what she was standing gawking at, but I didn't want to lose Priscilla. Besides, I was afraid.

Priscilla came to after a second, and served the cakes in her best Irene Castle manner. And as soon as she'd sailed out with the empty tray, I turned on poor Mazie: "What the devil does that girl mean by goggling at me like a rubberneck wagon?" And I let down my coffee cup so hard it broke clean in half and loosed a perfect Johnstown flood all over my end of the table. Those cups are pets of Mazie's. She clasped her hands and looked at me more in sorrow than in anger, but not so much more.

And just then, everything timed to the second for another tableau, Priscilla lets in Emily Mays. All in all, I should say that the rest of Mazie's breakfast was about spoiled. I ate as though I was after the speed record and pretty nearly up to it, and except for half a dozen grunts, let the conversation take care of itself. Emily had just dropped in, she said, to find out whether we were going to be at the Innesses' card party the next night; but be that as it may, now that she was in she wasn't missing anything. Emily has about as much sense of humor as a bill collector, and she bats high in the gossip league. Mazie might have felt better if there'd been any possibility of explaining. But she couldn't very well explain to Priscilla, who always seemed to happen in just as I was passing Mazie the salt or the butter as though I was playing shuffle-board, and explaining to Emily Mays would have been as much good as holding forth on ambition to a cigar store Indian.

Emily tore herself away after a bit, and I was clever enough to manage to slide out with her—after dodging Mazie's glares and potting her on the side of the nose with a flying kiss—so as not give the iron a chance to strike while it was hot, you might say. I had a qualm or two over the notion of Emily dashing about airing her conclusions, but I soon forgot that.

I called Mazie up from the office in the afternoon (I always call her up at least once a day just for luck) just as it seemed she was in the midst of four thousand things that had to be done before she could dress and go out. In fact, I had to take a little five minutes' nap on the 'phone before the operator managed to get her at all.

"So you see, Cussie," she said, "this will have to be a short one."

I threw my voice into a man-eating lower register, like Simon Legree's. "I didn't call you up to entertain you, baggage. I left half a cigar in the ash tray. Don't touch it—see?"

I've had receivers hung up on me once or twice before, but never with quite so expressive a bang as the one Mazie cut me off with. The joke of it was, she'd been getting ready to meet me downtown, where we were to have dinner before going to the Innesses. After I'd been wearing out the carpet three quarters of an hour overtime in a hotel lobby, she came tripping in, explaining sweetly that she'd been delayed by my performance on the telephone.

Now, as a usual thing, I rather fancy my style in ordering a dinner in a restaurant. Easy and sang-froid, but sure, might describe it. But this shot, when the waiter bent over, all ready for stage directions, I grouched up at him, "What's the big idea?"

The waiter was one of these polite-to-the-last fellows, and he did his best not to look flabbergasted. He stuttered, "S-sir?"

"Breathing down my back!" I barked.

"Custard!" hissed Mazie, and the pathetic waiter actually jumped.

"Which? Yes ma'am. You—you'll start with custard?" he says.

"No. Come around here. I'll give the order," Mazie told him. And she did, and a good one, too, clever girl; and as soon as he'd right about faced with it she woke up to the fact that I was glaring at a little thin man with a butler's hair-cut and tortoise shell specs, sitting alone at the next table. He had been looking at Mazie. Everybody looks at Mazie, and I'm always glad to be able to feel that I'm fostering a civic appreciation of beauty. But this was my first good chance to try out my new jealous nature, and I was taking advantage of it. By the time Mazie had spotted what was going on, the poor little shrimp was crouching behind his menu card and I was glaring right through it. A terrific kick was registered on my left shin under the table.

"Intermission," says Mazie. "I won't deny that you did very well and that it's all been very interesting and unusual, but I'm hungry and it's going to be a good dinner and I don't want you to spoil it."

"You're the doctor," I gave in. "I'm only the druggist's kid, and if you say homeopathic doses, it's not mine to reason why. But Doc, what do you say to extending the intermission to a couple of hours and running in on that Shaw play? You can 'phone to the Innesses that we'll be there in time for the eats."

Mazie thought it a perfect idea. Mazie and I don't know which we hate more, cards or the Innesses. So she 'phoned to tell them I'd broken my neck, or whatever it was she told them, and that we'd be a little late. And then for a while I didn't have to bother being anybody but myself. And a good thing, too, because it really was a corking show—that one about the tailor and the silly ass of a lion. And then we went to the Innesses.

We arrived just in time to have a couple of hands dealt us, and then everybody sat down to one of those gorgeous Inness-chef spreads. It seemed to me there was a sort of strain in the air as we came in, but I told myself I must be imagining it. Anyway, pretty soon I had another chance to be jealous. They had put me next to Mrs. Ted Snyder, and I'd been making grunts at her conversation and scowling down at my plate like a good brute, spearing blue points.

Roscoe Heming was directly opposite Mazie. Everybody knows how crazy Roscoe was, and still is, about Mazie. It's my only reason for liking him, for the boy's a terrible fool.

He sheep's-eyed over at Mazie across his oysters. "Mazie," he said, "if you keep on improving you'll be run in for exceeding the beauty limit."

I looked up and showed him my teeth. "Where does it hurt most, Heming?"

Poor Roscoe dropped his oyster fork on the floor and banged his low but throbbing forehead against the edge of the table reaching for it.

"Brute!" hisses Mrs. Ted, meaning me; and everybody else seemed to second the motion, judging by the looks I received.

After that there really was a strain, no imagination about it. I felt as welcome as a wet Sunday. For the sake of art and the problem, I kept up the brute thing, even to an open-faced sneer when Mazie assured Mrs. Inness that we'd had a most enjoyable evening; but on the way home I wasn't sorry when Mazie gave the brute a pretty unmistakable exit cue.

"But Mazie," I said, "you can't eat your cake and sleep well too. You can't burn your candle at both ends and have much of a middle left. You can't have variety—"

"Maybe you're right, Custard," she cut me off. A fine open mind, Mazie has. A low voice and a fine open mind is an excellent combination in a woman, as the poet says; and that's Mazie. She thought it over a minute and then admitted, "Yes, there's no doubt of it; at least the day's been exciting. But for heaven's sake tomorrow let's have a husband with a shave and a necktie, anyway."

"What do you say we make the next one a boob?" I suggested. "Well meaning, you

know, but tactless—always saying the wrong thing in the wrong way to the wrong person at the wrong time."

Mazie was willing. Sunday was ahead of us, and we were due to call on Aunt Flavia to collect a vase she had for us, and Mazie was willing to risk anything that might counteract the juxtaposition of Sunday and Aunt Flavia. That visit to Aunt Flavia might be called the beginning of the end. I've given you a slight idea of Aunt Flavia. If she'd been born in Puritan times the Weekday Go to Meeting League would have blackballed her for her narrow-mindedness. But she has bankfuls of money, and this vase she gave Mazie was fine enough to be stuck out of sight in a museum.

Of course she made us stay to tea. She always does. Tea and jam and muffins and extract of virtue being its own reward. It was at tea that Mazie's third husband's tactlessness ran rampant. Aunt Flavia aimed her round, ready-to-be-shocked eyes at me and said, "Nephew Custer, I trust you have been in good—ah—I trust you have been well?"

"Not so very," I admitted. "I've been a little bilious."

Aunt Flavia let out a little sound, and opened her mouth for air.

"Yes," I went on sort of dreamily, "and do you know, it's a funny thing, considering how I suffer from it, but I never can remember whether the bile is secreted by the biler or the pancreas. Which is it?"

There was a ghastly silence. I could feel Mazie praying down a giggle. I didn't look at her, because Mazie's giggle is more contagious than the grippe. We've disgraced ourselves that way too often.

Aunt Flavia finally got back her power of speech. "Really, I fear you will have to inquire elsewhere. And if I may say so, the question of—ah—the topic seems to me hardly suitable to the present occasion. Will you take cream or lemon?"

My trained face registered horror.

"Oh, not lemon! Nothing is so bad for the gastric juice—or juices. How many are there, anyway?"

Aunt Flavia looked groggy and dug up her smelling salts. She always has them handy in a pocket or somewhere. And at that Mazie's giggle got away from her. The poor girl was soon in such a bad way trying to contain herself that I had to get up and thump her on the back.

I let up for a while, and by and by Mazie was herself again. All was serene for a bit, and Aunt Flavia had almost forgotten her smelling salts, when the question of war came up, as it's bound to.

"After this war's over," I said, "there's talk of letting each man that's left over have half a dozen wives."

Aunt Flavia looked at me as though I had just wagged my cloven hoof at her across the table.

"Why, to increase the population," I went on, as though I thought she was burning for details. "They'll want more—"

"I feel ill," said Aunt Flavia. "I'm afraid I'll—I'll have to beg to be excused."

The poor dear did look as though she'd seen a ghost, at that—a ghost with one stocking coming down. Mazie and I left her all comfortable in a big chair with a maid holding the salts for her, and sneaked off home with the vase.

After Mazie had squelched the last giggle, she started to light into me for the way I'd treated Aunt Flavia. Said I ought to be ashamed of myself. Now, I myself had half a feeling I ought to be, so I didn't like that a soupçon. And Mazie, for a wonder, made a regular nagging party of it. I suppose the poor girl's brain was all flushed with unexploded giggles. Anyhow, in the midst of the row, Mrs. Inness burst in, all excitement and resolution. Mrs. Inness is the original peacemaker, and about as welcome as a peacemaker can expect to be. She crowds in where a microbe would fear to tread.

She gave us a reproachful, motherly once-over. "Now, Mazie, now Custer! You two have been fighting again!" And before we could get our breath, she was ploughing on: "I couldn't rest another second after seeing my duty! You children must be brought together—I mean you must not be allowed to drift apart. Oh, it's terrible, terrible! But there's so much I can tell you from my ten years of married life. This must not go on! I want you to be-

lieve I have only your own interest at heart —and Custer, while I think of it, I had absolutely nothing to do with the way my guests treated you last night. It was shameful! I won't say that you altogether exactly didn't deserve it, but—"

"Ah hah!" I thinks. Just like that I understood a lot of things about the Innesses' party that had been bothering me. Emily Mays and her twin-six tongue! And Mazie's mind, I could tell by her face, was working the same way. Mazie and I loathe the very thought of gossip, at least the thought of other people's gossip about us.

"Mrs. Inness," I said, "whatever pleasure the thought of any unpleasantness between Mazie and me may have given you and your friends, I can assure you that there is absolutely no foundation for it. We have never been happier. We have never been so happy. There is no law in nature that would permit anything to come between us, but if anything could, we should be competent to settle it for ourselves."

A bit rough on Mrs. Inness, no doubt, but it had its effect. She backed out scared and nervous and without knowing exactly where she stood, explaining that of course she was very, very glad if everything was all right, and so sorry if she had made a mistake, and hoped we would forgive her if there was anything to forgive. I magnanimously assured her there wasn't, but we'd forgive her just the same; and then Mazie and I were alone again, so fussed that we didn't know how to look at each other. To give myself something to do I unwrapped the precious vase, spread the paper on a high Chippendale chair and climbed up so's to have plenty of elbow room to give the vase its place of honor above the fireplace. Now, I'd been ass enough to pay eighty dollars for that chair, and always treated it as a guest; and it showed its sense of honor by seizing that moment to try to stand on one leg.

Hugging the vase for dear life, I did a lovely Charlie Chaplin. For the first time I really appreciated the sensations of a man falling off a precipice. The incidents of my past life flashed by like an animated-news movie. And finally I landed with a dull and not unsickening thud on the small of my back. But somehow or other, more by instinct than good management, the vase was still snug in my arms without so much as a scratch.

"Oh!" Mazie sings out. "Did you break the *vase?*"

Now, maybe you've heard of the fellow in the joke that something of the sort happened to, and what he did. I'm sure the thing wouldn't have occured to me if it hadn't been for that fellow in the joke. I gave him one incandescent thought and decided he couldn't have acted otherwise.

"No!" I yelled. *"But I will!"*

And with that I slammed the darn thing against the wall, and even if the king's horses and all the king's men could have fixed up Humpty Dumpty, they'd have begged to be excused after one squint at what was left of that vase.

I'll have to request you to imagine my feelings. Suffice it to say that, sitting there on the floor amid the ruins, staring at the dent in the wall and wondering what became of the man in the joke, I expected Mazie to drown me with oratory and then rush out without her hat to bring action for divorce. But what were the wonderful creature's first words?

"Custard! How perfectly *splendid!*"

Then it was that one of those great lights burst on me. I rose majestically to my feet for the grand bluff.

"Mazie," I said, "let this be the end. Your hankering after the impossible has brought the tongue of scandal flapping about our ears, and I, for one, intend to maintain a peaceful home or none at all. Hereafter, if you're not satisfied with one husband, and that one the original guy, you can trot back to your mother—and variety."

The next second she was in my arms.

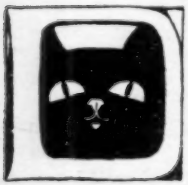
"Oh, Custard!" she blubbered. "I never said—I wasn't—satisfied with you! I—I guess I just—must have wanted you to—to show you were boss—and now—and now you've done it!"

And while the dear girl's tears were making mortar of the vase-dust on my shoulder, I looked at the dent in the wall and decided to have a frame put around it.

JOE DREESE'S GETAWAY

By LOUIS SCHNEIDER

Joe Dreese has a bad habit. He mixes whiskey with business. Another member of the Jud Whedon gang also indulges at the wrong time, hastening the downfall of the gang and inspiring the adoption of a prohibition amendment.



DOWN from the lightly wooded hills that come within half a mile of Greensburg on the south-west, rode the six men who comprised the Jud Whedon gang. Plainly saddle-reared, they rode in a loose group, disconnected spatterings of pointless talk running among them at intervals. They fell into a silence as they came to a halt with the town in full view below them. Joe Dreese, the youngest of them, who had been lagging all the way, kept well to the rear, unsteady in his seat. Occasionally he swallowed hard.

For a minute they sat so, and then Whedon slanted his eyes at the lowering sun. He brought their cold, calculating gaze from the sun to the men about him. Dreese alone seemed to be unconscious of the fact that they rested for a longer time than usual because they were waiting for him.

Whedon slipped out of his saddle.

"See to your cinches, boys," he commanded.

Straightening up a moment later he found Dreese still in the saddle, looking down at the town. He took in the other's absent manner and flushed cheeks.

"Dreese!" he projected coldly.

Dreese jerked together, slung a leg over the pommel, avalanched to the ground, and fell to work at his cinches. Whedon turned to a squat, swarthy fellow at his left.

"Fallegon, you've been shovin' the bottle around anyhow."

Fallegon shrugged. "He's got one of his own," he countered, an ugly smile on his heavy, puffed face.

Dreese edged uneasily to the opposite side of his mount.

"After this you'll let the booze alone while we've got a job on," pronounced Whedon. "Do you want to land yourself in the pen, or in a pine box, and maybe take some o' the rest o' us with you?"

"Nobody's hurt! Nobody's hurt!" blustered Fallegon.

"You heard what I said," retorted Whedon.

They finished their inspection and then lounged about on the grass, smoking, for a time. Finally Whedon rose.

"About time to go," he announced. "Now listen: Fallegon, you and Ford ride around and come in on the Clear Valley road. Brady, and you, Jones, 'll come in on the Three Forks road. You'll keep the top o' the hill at the edge o' town till you get the sign from Fallegon. Then all o' you'll come in slow and drop reins about a half a block below the bank. Dreese is comin' with me, and by the time you're in place we'll come in from this side. Then Fallegon 'll come up his street, leavin' the horses with Ford, and Brady 'll come up his, leavin' the horses with Jones. You fellows that stay with the horses 'll come sauntering up slow with 'em as soon as you see Dreese here get down and go inside with Fallegon and Brady. And keep your heads, all o' you. Don't hurry till we're right into it. Shut the door behind you, Fallegon, and get the drop on the cashier and hold him in his place till Dreese and Brady get the rest o' 'em bunched with him. And no fool shootin'. Keep up our rep, boys. We ain't had to do no killin' up to now, and we don't want to begin. It ain't necessary if you work quick and keep your heads. All clear?"

They nodded and drew into pairs.

"All right. Let's go."

Five minutes later, while Whedon and

Dreese rode slowly along, watching the roads on which the others were to come in, Whedon drew up short with an oath.

"What's up?" asked Dreese.

"Didn't you see that flash over there?... Fallegon's hittin' the bottle again. When a man in his place gets so far along that he has to get his nerve out of a bottle, it's about time he's huntin' a place where there ain't so much at stake—and I'll tell him so, too. Any drunk can get into trouble, but it takes a man with a clear head to make his getaway."

They rode on again.

"What makes you let him tank you up?" demanded Whedon, turning suddenly.

Dreese lowered his eyes, and his lean, boyish face flushed still deeper.

"Need the courage, too?"

"No."

"Then why—"

"Because I— Oh, the devil; it won't hurt me!"

They rode on in silence. A hundred yards farther along, Whedon gestured as one who dismisses from his mind an utterly unfathomable question. Dreese saw the gesture and twisted in his saddle.

When Fallegon and Brady came up their respective streets as Dreese slipped out of the saddle in front of the bank, Whedon gave the former a keen look as he advanced, and his brows lowered.

"Steady, now," he growled as Fallegon came abreast.

Fallegon shrugged, touched a match to his almost consumed cigarette, and motioned Brady and Dreese into the building ahead of him.

Dreese strode down the length of the lobby to the left, kicked open the door communicating with the banking quarters, whipped out his guns, covered the bookkeepers and assistants, and drove them toward the cashier's wicket. Brady had gone to the right, and a figure backing out of the directors' room with hands up proved that he was filling his part of the program. Fallegon had flung a grain sack through the wicket to the cashier.

"Make your donations—and make 'em quick," he ordered. "All the loose change you've got 'll do."

He displayed no weapons, and it was only when the cashier leaped quickly backward and slammed the safe door that he jerked out his guns with a curse. The cashier reached for his gun at the same time.

Fallegon fired, and the cashier spun half way round and clapped his left hand to his right shoulder.

"Here, Brady," cried Fallegon, "get this out o' the cash drawers into the sack while I make him open the safe. Get busy with that combination, Mister Man, or I'll give you a taste of something closer to where you live!"

"Careful, there," warned Dreese angrily. "If you'd done what you was told, nothin' like this would have happened. You've started enough as it is. Listen to that outside!... Hell—no wonder! You left the door open, too."

There was a growing clamor on the streets, and through the windows could be seen those who held the horses and guarded the outside. All were in their saddles, with weapons drawn. Then came a shot, crashing into the front of the building—another—half a dozen. As they thickened Whedon spurred his horse up on the sidewalk and to the door.

"Hell's a-poppin' out here," he yelled. "Come a-runnin' with what you've got, and let's ride for it!"

Brady threw his sack through the wicket to Fallegon, and together with Dreese ran out into the lobby while Fallegon held the group inside covered. Once together, they made a dash for the door.

Fallegon made it first, with Brady following. A revolver barked behind them, a bullet cut past Dreese's head, quickly followed by two more. Dreese's sombrero spun off, and Brady fell and lay face down. With a curse Fallegon turned and swung his gun on the cashier, who, with his gun in his left hand, was by now snapping his hammer on an empty cylinder. Dreese threw out his arm and sent Fallegon's bullet wide of its mark.

"What's the good!" he rapped. "Get out and away from here!"

They sprang across the walk and to their horses, which had become almost unman-

ageable, Ford's mount, especially. It pranced up and down in spite of all his spurring, and Ford offered an almost stationary target. Which was fatal, for he went down before the rest were well in the saddle.

By the time the rest had gone ten rods, Brady's horse, which Jones was still leading, ran around the head of the one on which Jones rode and brought the two to a tangled halt. A Winchester barked and Jones fell, while the two horses stampeded and took to the open country.

Whedon, Dreese, and Fallegon had gone nearly two blocks, with bullets coming at them from all quarters, when suddenly, on the sidewalk to the right, a boy of four or five years sprang up from his play. He held a toy return-cork, repeating popgun. He jumped up and down in glee, and echoed their sinister volleys with diminutive ploppings from the muzzle which he presented at them. Whedon burst into a yelling laugh at the boy's antics, but Fallegon, racing along a stride ahead and to the left, brought his weapon to a level with an oath. For the second time his aim was spoiled, this time by Whedon, who almost lifted his horse forward.

"Here!" he barked into Fallegon's livid face. "Are you crazy? You try anything more like that, and I'll—"

He broke off short and clutched at his saddle horn, swaying dizzily. Fallegon collapsed over his horse's neck, rolled off to one side, hung with a foot in its stirrup and jerked along with the lunging of the frightened horse for a rod or two, then catapulted into a dust-clouded heap in the street. A single bullet from a cross-alley had found them both.

Dreese, well to the rear, swerved out to miss Fallegon's body, and spurred to the side of Whedon.

"Hurt bad?" he asked.

"Through the edge o' the—lung," gasped Whedon, indicating his right breast. "Be all right—directly. It's—the shock."

They swung out of town, Dreese steadying his chief. Looking back from the first rise, he saw that the pursuit was already begun.

"Go ahead," said Whedon,"—and good luck to you. You can't get the best—out o' that horse—hanging to me—this way."

"I'm stickin'," Dreese gave back.

So long as they were in sight of town bullets of heavy caliber fell all about them, but when they swept below the first rise, these ceased. And in spite of the fact that they were upon a straight-away road, none of the bullets had found the desired mark.

As the first of the pursuers came over the rise the bullets began to fly again. They wasted no time, however, on returning the fire, but put all there was in them to getting the best possible speed out of their mounts.

Handicapped by Whedon's wound, they found themselves being outdistanced until Whedon, by sheer force of will, braced up and bettered his riding. Then they drew away.

So they rode another quarter of an hour, the efforts of their horses becoming each moment more labored. Finally Whedon's horse, because of his rider's greater weight, began to lag behind.

"Go ahead, Joe," panted Whedon. "Slip out to the side and—make for the hills."

"We slip out or go out together," returned Dreese doggedly.

They rode another mile, and then, at an abrupt drop in the road, he suddenly threw a glance forward and then back.

At the foot of the sharp slope ahead of them rode two men—on nearly fresh mounts.

"Get those horses!" yelled Dreese as he jerked his Winchester from the scabbard beneath his thigh and whirled his horse about in the road just this side the highest point. "I'll keep 'em back!"

He sprang down, brought the rifle to his shoulder, and dropped two quick shots into the road in front of the pursuers. Spouting geysers of dust rose, and the bullets whined hungrily. This brought the chase to an abrupt halt. The men ducked and scattered to the sides of the road. Some of them spurred back as fast as they had come.

Dreese himself dodged behind the rise, and then after perhaps ten seconds rose and fired again, ducking quickly.

"Let me know when you're ready, Whedon," he called. "And don't forget my scabbard."

Then he rose after a quarter of a minute and fired, ducked, rose and fired again—only head and shoulders showing each time—then ducked again. A bullet or two came so uncomfortably near him that they made his ribs shrink.

"Ready!" called Whedon.

Dreese waited a bit and then bobbed up and once more fired down the road—two shots perhaps a quarter of a minute apart. Then, filling the magazine as he ran, he came to his new mount, slipped the rifle into its transferred scabbard, and sprang astride.

"I've got 'em buffaloed back there," he exulted. "They don't know whether I'm still there or not!... Thanks," he grinned down at those whom Whedon had just relieved of their horses. "Don't look gift horses in the mouth! We didn't these."

"Damn Fallegon!" coughed Whedon as they tore away. "If he'd left the stuff alone till— Oh, well, the way he crumpled up—what it got him into—ain't botherin' him any more."

Dreese involuntarily felt of an inside pocket, and then as quickly drew his hand away.

As soon as the pursuers found out what had taken place they took up the chase again. Dreese laughed back, for the distance between them was now increasing in spite of all which those behind could do.

Whedon turned too, but, not keeping a lifting rein on his horse's head, the animal stumbled, skidded on its knees, and then turned a complete somersault. Whedon flung himself off to one side and hurtled along in the dust.

"Damn Fallegon!" he rapped out even as he fell.

As quickly as he could, Dreese stopped and went back. The horse was up before he got there, and a jerking foreleg told that it would be of no further use to them.

A glance showed him the situation. He sprang down, flung Whedon's dislodged rifle across a depression in the road, and jumped on the barrel, ending its usefulness. Then he turned to his chief, who was struggling to his feet, though wholly dazed. He steered him to the side of the horse from which he himself had just dismounted.

"Get up and hang on!" he shouted into the other's ear. "Hang on—and we'll make it to the hills yet. We're close to 'em—not half a quarter to the road to the left to the Pothole country. Half a mile—three-quarters—and we'll be where we can hold 'em off till night, and then get away easy enough. Hang on!"

He wrapped the rawhide thongs at the left side of the pommel about his left hand and steadied Whedon with his right, running alongside. It was slow work, but finally, with bullets raining all about them, they turned into the road to the left.

Whedon had been hanging on with a powerful grip, by mere instinct, his eyes closed; but now he recovered sufficiently to know what was happening.

"Here," he protested, "—Joe—let me off. You get on. You can make it."

"We'll make it," cried Dreese. "We'll make it. Just hang on!"

He released Whedon a moment to slap the pony on the rump. It sprang forward, and, as though it might have been an echo of the slap, came another sound, sinister, sickening—the "thup!" of a bullet in flesh.

Whedon groaned and collapsed. As he wilted forward, Dreese caught him, swung his left leg across and brought the body crossways of the saddle. Then he sprang up behind and made the best progress that he could.

It was heart-bursting work for the horse, but Dreese did not spare it. They took the rise to the hills at a straining lope. Well into these, he turned sharply to the left.

Turn and dodge as he would, however, he could not shake, much less outdistance, those behind him. So finally he worked up to a sheer face of rock. Dismounting, he dragged Whedon to him, pulled his rifle out of its sheath, kicked the heaving side of his horse and, when it had broken away, dragged Whedon to a clump of bushes. This he parted, and worried his burden through into the mouth of a cave.

He knelt over the prostrate form to

listen for heart beats, then whipped a bottle from his inner pocket. Lifting Whedon's head he forced some of the liquor down his throat. Whedon swallowed —a spasmodic, straining gulp, and then another.

"That—cussed stuff!" Whedon strangled out weakly. "Fallegon, you—you had too much of it—and you—you'd 'a' killed that kid! A kid, Fallegon! I—I'm done with you!"

He struggled to a sitting position in Dreese's arm, groaning.

"Why, what?... Where?.... Oh!" He lifted his filming eyes. "Why didn't you do—what I said? I'm done for—through here this time." He laid a hand on his blood-soaked waistband. "All washy in there—with blood. I can feel it."

Dreese gulped and looked out at the screened entrance.

"Here," he offered in a shaky voice. "Better take a little more o' this."

"No," husked Whedon, growing heavier in the supporting arm. "Ain't it done me —all the dirt it could—'round by way o'— Fallegon? Damn him! I ought to've— Well, let it go.... How you goin' to—make your getaway?

"Whichever way you—do it," continued Whedon in what was scarcely more than a whisper, "you don't need—that stuff. Wait till it's dark—and then you can give 'em— the slip. You'll need a clear head though —and—and—"

He sighed, slumped limply out of the supporting arm, and was still.

Dreese rose unsteadily from his knees. He passed a fore-arm jerkily across his wet forehead and licked his lips. Unconscious of the act, he brought the bottle slowly upward.

And as if it had suddenly stung him in the face he crashed it on the floor.

"Make my getaway?" he whipped out. "You're damn right, but not from the thing that Jud thought." He kicked a swift foot through the shattered bits of the bottle. "It's from you I'm going to make my getaway, and right here and now is where I make it! They'll give me some sort of a chance—those out there; but you never would. I'll let 'em put me where you can't get at me for a while. They know I didn't do any shootin', and a term in the pen is the worst they can do to me. Right there's where I'll lick you!"

He strode quickly out at the leaf-hidden entrance, thrust both hands high above his head, and went to find his pursuers.

In the June number: OFT ON A STILLY NIGHT *by George Gilbert.* With the help of Tom Moore and the town hall janitor, the counsel for the defense administers an anaesthetic to the plaintiff and the jury in a suit involving certain disputed points over water power rights.

A NIGHT IN PARIS, MASS.

By GORTON VEEDER CARRUTH

The story of Donald Adair and the three thieves, and of the sacred elephants of India, etc., being a tale such as Shahrazad would have liked to relate to Shahriyar, ancient ruler of the countries of India and China.

DONALD Adair leaned back, thrust up his eye-shade, and glumly surveyed the start of the usual after-work poker game in one corner of the local room.

"Not to-night," he said shortly, in answer to an invitation from one of the group.

"Been grouchy as a fighting bulldog all day," commented the card player addressed, in a low voice. The others grunted assent and the game began.

Adair was tired out, physically, mentally, spiritually. His fatigue of body and mind was the result of his regular ten gruelling hours of work as city editor of the Paris *Telegram*. His soul weariness was due to a slowly accumulated burden of disgust with the monotony of his daily grind at the desk.

He switched off his desk lamp, elevated his feet to the top of the desk, filled and lighted his pipe and waited gloomily for the first edition to come up. Simultaneously with turning off the light he turned on a familiar dialogue in his brain. A suppressed Donald Adair came forth to do battle with the city editor.

"Penny-ante!" moaned the insurgent Adair. "Cards! Tiddledywinks! Fudge! And you took up newspaper work for the excitement of it!"

"Well," replied the city editor defensively, "it's supposed to furnish excitement, isn't it? And how did I know any better than anybody else?"

"You know now—at least you know how it is in Paris, Massachusetts. Ladies' Aid meetings, cheap politics, trolleys off the track, W. C. T. U. conventions, seventeen "drunks" arrested yesterday, a fine window display by our leading merchant—and advertiser. Hot stuff! Why, you didn't even know enough to stay a reporter. You saw more excitement then than you do now."

"There was more money inside."

"Money! I thought you were after adventure! Think you'll get any by staying glued to this desk? See here, my boy, how do you think those chaps back in Round Table times found excitement? By crawling into their castles and drawing the portcullis or the gauntlet or whatever it was in after them? Not much! They put on their tin suits and took their exaggerated toothpicks over their shoulders and went out and looked for trouble. When they got word of a fire-spouting dragon out in the bush somewhere, they didn't send for the poundmaster—they went out and argued with the beast themselves."

"Oh, all right, all right," agreed the gloomy man with his feet on the desk, "admitting all that; still, remember we are in the twentieth century and Paris—Massachusetts, not France—and have to stay where we are put."

"Well, how do you know that there isn't adventure to be had right here, if you looked for it?" demanded the other Adair speaking rapidly, for the office boy had appeared in the distance with a bundle of damp papers under his arm. "Supposing you went out looking for it, ready to jump in and help create it yourself, how do you know you couldn't find it? Never tried, did you?"

A fresh, ink-smelling paper slid into Adair's lap and automatically he switched on his light and ran his eye down the columns looking for "bugs." He corrected those he found, sent the paper to the com-

posing room, clapped on his hat, seized his umbrella, for it was drizzling outside, and went out to get his supper.

As he reached the door and opened his umbrella, he paused and surveyed the street, deserted at that smallest of the wee, sma' hours. It was a typical New England business street, named "Main Street," of course, though "Commonplace Avenue" would have been more appropriate. Stretching away in the glare of arc lights he saw patched, uneven brick pavement with two lines of trolley tracks breaking through it and trolley wire sagging over it; irregular sidewalks, a composite of flagstones and cement; and wooden and brick business buildings varying in height from one story monitors to the city's skyscraper, six stories tall. A layer of slimy mud clung to the pavement; cheap advertising placards, exploiting cheaper goods, adorned the store windows; ugly electric signs hung higher up; false cornices fractured the skyline. Could there be anything in the way of genuine adventure back of this—anything but the sordid and tawdry counterfeit popular among the callow?

It was Donald Adair, the wholly sophisticated newspaperman, who entered the Presto lunch room and ordered a chicken pie and a cup of coffee. His sophistication became bitter as he burst through the soggy, leathery crust of his pie and jabbed for the bits of veal within. While in that mood he looked up and saw across the empty lunch room young Horace Chapin bearing down on him in a wavering, bibulous walk. The unsteady scion of a noble New England family sank into the seat beside Adair and turned a pleasant if bleary eye upon him.

"Eyes desheive me," he asked, "or is it old college chum, 'Dair?"

"It is," said Adair curtly.

"'Dair, you're good fellow; tell me something?"

"All right."

"Where am I, 'Dair, where am I? Just tell me that; where am I?"

Adair told him.

"Now 'Dair," very gravely said the son of James DeForest Chapin, than whom there was no more austere pillar of the community, "now, 'Dair, tell me—is there beastly Chinaman with me or isn't there?"

"There is not."

The young man fell to chuckling foolishly "Gave him slip at last, eh? Foxy boy, Charley Sing, but humble servant not so slow. Knows some awful good things to drink, Charley does."

Adair eyed Chapin with repugnance as he rambled on. Why was this young aristocrat in evening clothes out dissipating with a Chinaman? Then something Chapin said caught his attention.

"Awful interested in Father's gods, Charley is," murmured Chapin. "Pesters me with questions all the time. I don' know anything 'bout 'em. Don' want to know. Make Father trouble enough."

Adair whistled silently to himself. Maybe there was something besides rumor in the story that old James Chapin's priceless collection of oriental art treasures was a source of constant and peculiar anxiety to him. He was a passionate orientalist, who had devoted the proceeds of an inherited fortune and the labor of fifty years to gathering together exquisite lacquers, jades, ivories, porcelain, armor and arms, rugs, paintings, statuary and all the curious and beautiful things that the patient, loving labor of the East has given to the world. It had been hinted that Chapin had not been slow to take advantage of the lack of the Ten Commandments in that quarter of the globe in which he had found his treasures. Knowing ones whispered that his sharp nervousness and hermit-like life were due to a dread of meeting the agents of certain aggrieved religious sects or potentates of distant lands where human life is not held so sacred as occidentals could wish it. However that might be, it was certain that no stranger lacking the best of credentials found a welcome at the big Chapin mansion out on Boscobel Avenue.

But if the father spent his time dusting his treasures and peering through the blinds, his son did not. That youth was a well-developed "sport" with about as much interest in Eastern art as a mule has in methods of salvation. He had now relapsed into silence in his seat beside

Adair, but as the latter prepared to go he roused and spoke again.

"Say, 'Dair, take me home, tha's a goo' fellow," he said querulously. "Don' wanna see beastly Chinaman again."

Adair was about to suggest that the trained aid of a nocturnal taxi-driver be obtained when a sudden impulse, born of the argument with himself earlier in the night, checked the words on his lips. An ironical spirit of daring rose within him. Here was adventure!

"All right, Chapin," he said cheerfully. "Come along."

With Chapin clinging to his arm, Adair went out past the grinning counterman and the cashier to the sidewalk. A Boscobel Avenue trolley came booming along the deserted street like an express train and Adair flagged it. With some difficulty he hoisted Chapin aboard and then persuaded him to use the seat-back and not his shoulder for a pillow. Chapin promptly fell asleep and Adair was left to his own somewhat grimly humorous thoughts as the trolley sped lurching and clanging out under the elms of Boscobel Avenue.

If the trip yielded nothing better, thought Adair, it would be worth while purely for the sake of the meeting with James Chapin. That gentleman did not like him because once, as a reporter, Adair had spoken jocosely of a gargoylish bronze idol as "His tin nobs" in the course of an interview. It would be interesting to observe the acid old aristocrat's demeanor when he found himself under obligation to the irreverent newspaperman for the succor of his dissolute son.

More than that, Adair looked forward with humorous interest to seeing again—and by moonlight, for the rain had stopped and the moon shone between ragged, scudding clouds—the row of fantastic bronze idols that adorned the Chapin porch and which the vulgar called "Chapin's Chinese Nine," because a number of the gods stood in postures highly suggestive of those of baseball players in action. Also there were scattered about the lawn other huge, grotesque gods that ought to look satisfyingly supernatural in the mystery-making moonlight.

The car stopped before the gate of the Chapin place and Adair punched the heir of the estate into consciousness and dragged him out. Boscobel Avenue, as far as eye could see, was deserted except for themselves and the rapidly departing trolley. It was a street of large estates with the houses far apart and hidden from the roadway by high fences backed by shrubbery and trees. Guiding the unsteady Chapin by one arm, Adair passed between two rugged stone gateposts into the shadow of a giant beech tree that overspread the gravel driveway. The Chapin house, a full quarter of a mile away, was not visible.

As Adair moved forward in the shadow of the tree with his unsteady companion, a cloud slipped over the moon and for a moment the darkness was unrelieved except by the faint gleam from a street lamp behind them. Suddenly Adair sensed a movement among the shadows in front and a little to the right of the driveway. Startled, he stopped and looked intently in that direction. His first impression was that a huge section of shadow, blacker than the rest, had detached itself and was moving towards him. The next instant he was running across the lawn at top speed, his arms out-stretched before him, his breathing stopped, his voice choked. Back of him padded a great black beast, stretching forth a clutching tentacle after him. He heard a choked scream at his left and out of the corner of his eye caught a glimpse of Chapin fleeing crazily, with another huge, white-tusked animal racing at his heels.

Adair's brain was not wholly paralyzed. "Elephants!" A thread of ironically humorous thought ran through his terror. "Elephants! In Boscobel Avenue! Ponderous pachyderms puncturing Puritan propriety! Mammoth mastodon menacing muddled Mayflower millionaire! Terrible tusker trampling—"

Then the irresistible trunk curled about him and he was jerked up and flung backwards, wriggling as impotently as a fishing worm. Hands clutched him and his head was muffled in thick folds of cloth. Into his nostrils crept a sweet, stinging odor, and he ceased to struggle.

"Oh, well," he thought, "what does it matter, anyhow?" and he slipped into unconsciousness.

Just why Adair came to when he did, he never knew, unless it was by reason of the same abnormality that enabled him to sit in a dentist's chair and absorb tank after tank of nitrous oxide without showing the slightest tendency to go to sleep. He first became aware that he was alive by finding himself in a terrible storm at sea with the wind howling and hissing and the ship pitching like a rocking horse. He was correspondingly sick and moaned in extreme misery. Then "Clang! Clang! Clang!" It seemed as if all the church bells in the city were clashing discordantly in the large end of a megaphone and that the small end was thrust against his ear. He sat up and rested his chin on a low railing that he found surrounded him.

Slowly it was borne in upon his swimming senses that the clanging bells had been only the gong of a passing trolley, that the howling wind was the rustling of a stiff breeze in the leaves of a tree over his head and that the violent pitching motion was but the slow, peaceful swaying of the elephant that carried the howdah in which he was sitting. As these facts became plain to him, the stimulus of curiosity and excitement came to help in clearing his brain and in a few minutes he was ready for action.

"By George," he muttered, shaking in his eagerness, "this is the real thing! Now where is Chapin and the other elephant and what are the beggars, that brought them here, up to, anyhow?"

Close above him were the branches of a maple. Moved by a sudden impulse he grasped one and drew himself up into the tree. He swung across the side opposite the elephant and dropped to the turf, keeping a careful eye on the huge animal. But the amiable creature only looked around at him curiously and made no hostile move.

"Nice old girl," chuckled Adair a bit nervously. "Wish I had a peanut for her."

The filmy moonlight came and went through the scudding clouds. Adair, peering about him, saw a figure lying below a clump of bushes and investigating, found that it was Chapin. The young man was breathing heavily and lay inert under Adair's shaking.

"No use," Adair muttered. "Drunk and drugged into the bargain."

The tree under which the elephant was standing was about two hundred feet from the gateway. Going back toward the gates Adair saw his umbrella lying by the side of the driveway where he had dropped it when he had turned to run. He recovered the umbrella and then stood in uncertainty.

The ground at the left of the driveway sloped down to a lily pond that lay in a hollow below an Italian garden at the southern end of the house. As Adair looked in that direction the moon shone strongly out and he saw, moving like ghosts among the shrubbery at the bottom of the slope, two turbaned figures, followed by the big tusker that had chased Chapin.

Curving down to the pond was a path bordered on each side by thick lilac bushes of many strange, exotic varieties. Waiting until the moonlight paled and faded Adair darted down this lilac alley, bending low and running upon the grass at the side of the gravel path. White, grimacing gods glared at him from amid the leaves as he ran or, unheeding him, dreamed on with cold, blank eyes. A bronze dragon reared upon him with claws and jaws so savage that he gasped and swerved in his course. The air was heavy-sweet with the fragrance of the many-colored blossoms that brushed his face. He seemed to have entered a strange, mystery-haunted land and the distant grinding of a trolley sounded with startling oddness in his ears.

On hands and knees he crawled into a summer-house at the end of the lilac lane. From behind a pillar he peered out upon the lily pond, gleaming with silvery ripples in the moonlight. A huge white god sat cross-legged upon a stone pedestal at the near end of the pond and gazed with black eye sockets upon the innocent beauty of the spring night.

So silently that they seemed creatures without substance, the elephant and the two Orientals moved out from the shadow

of a tree across the pond and approached the idol. Adair, watching breathlessly, saw the men stand aside and allow the elephant to come face to face with the blackly staring god. Then the beast's trunk went up and delicately the tip of it travelled up and down the idol's heavy figure. The trunk sank again and begar to swing listlessly as the elephant nodded in calm indifference. Impatiently the men turned away with a softly muttered word to the tusker. He followed obediently as they went on along the curving margin of the pond.

Adair, with a glimmer of understanding breaking through his wonder, slipped from the summer-house when they had passed from sight and cautiously worked his way to the rear of the idol they had just left. He crept into the shrubbery that surrounded the god on three sides, intent on worming his way through so that he could get a clear view of the other end of the pond without being seen himself. As he crawled behind the idol he looked up and found himself just below a long narrow aperture cut in the statue's back, an opening large enough to admit a man.

"Private doorway for the priest," he thought. "Used to slip in this way about the time the god was due to address the meeting. Wouldn't the old boy be surprised to see me use his entrance!"

Inside Adair found that when he stood upright his eyes came on a level with the pupilless eyes of the bronze image. He was just in time to see the elephant and the two men reach another idol similar to the one he was in, but smaller, and set on a stone pedestal in a circular space of lawn at the far end of the pond.

"Great Jehosophat!" murmured Adair, quivering with fresh excitement.

For the elephant, drawing close to this statue, began to show signs of a strange and powerful emotion. The great beast moaned, flung his trunk high above his head, and then knelt on his foreknees, the sensitive tip of the trunk feeling delicately about the base of the image.

The two men, visibly excited, drew close to the tusker's head. One of them muttered a command and the elephant with another moan, rose slowly. Then in response to another order the great trunk went about the idol so that it was held between trunk and tusks. Finally the elephant lifted the heavy stone god gently from the pedestal and laid it on the grass.

The two men stooped eagerly over the exposed base of the statue. The taller of them began to wield a small instrument and a light tapping and scraping sound came to Adair's ears. In a moment the man ceased this work and, stooping lower, pulled vigorously. He stumbled back, a slab of stone dropping from his hands, and Adair saw a black hole where before had been only smooth stone.

Before either of the men could move, a thrusting trunk slid between them and into the hollow interior of the idol. It drew forth and flung aloft triumphantly what looked to Adair like a small image that shone with a pure white lustre in the moonlight, and bore in its head two eyes of brilliant, flashing green. In a moment the animal set the little statue down and stood over it with protecting head and trunk.

"Must have scented it," Adair murmured to himself, drawing a deep breath.

Thrill had followed thrill so fast that Adair could hardly have been surprised at anything extraordinary. But the next phenomenon was one that, although not so startling, set him thinking rapidly. For when one of the men tried to take up the little green-eyed god he was repulsed gently but very firmly by the elephant. The other native, more insistent, was urged backwards so powerfully by the protecting trunk that he sat down suddenly in the grass. Angrily muttered commands and threats with the hook had no effect on the big beast. The men, glancing nervously about them, held a brief consultation and then, standing at a distance, gave another low order. Keeping his little eyes on them, the elephant picked up the large idol and set it on the pedestal again. He allowed the men to approach and work it into position so that no one could tell it had been moved. The stone slab that had been removed from the bottom was cast into the pond.

Adair took rapid counsel with himself. "Old man," he murmured, "it's time you broke into the little game."

From his pocket he drew a small electric torch that he carried to light him into his house when he went home at night after work. Then he began to chant in his deepest bass:

"Dies irae, dies illa,—"

The solemn words of the noble Latin hymn boomed hollow in his ears, redoubled in intensity by some ingenious formation of the interior of the idol.

At the first sound the two men wheeled alertly and the taller drew a gleaming blade from the folds of cloth about his waist. The elephant, too, faced about with his head towards Adair's idol. Adair flashed his electric torch through the eyes of the god and continued the solemn chant:

"Solvet saeclum in favilla;—"

The effect on the natives was markedly different. The shorter, stouter man was visibly shaken with fear and fell upon his knees with clasped hands outstretched towards the huge white god with the fire-glaring eyes and the booming voice. But the other, though exhibiting signs of uncertainty, stood erect and looked the dreadful god in the face. The ghostly moonlight came and went and as shadow fell upon them Adair ceased speaking and turned off the fiery eyes.

"O Gawd," prayed the man on his knees in the accents of the terrified American Negro, "Ah knowed this was all foolishness an' Ah didn't aim to come, hones' to Gawd. Ah don' aim to take nothin' what ain't mine an' Ah nevah will no mo'. Please, suh, don' be hard on a pore niggah what nevah meant no harm an'—"

He was checked by a lean, brown hand that closed over his mouth and the bright blade of a knife that was passed threateningly before his eyes. Seeing this, Adair again sent the rays of light dancing out from the god's eyes over the ripples on the pond and began to extemporize in his booming voice:

"Woe unto those who tamper with the great gods," he intoned. "Woe unto the sinners who lay profane hands upon the sacred images! Woe unto the thieves who come in the night! For the wrath of the gods shall fall upon them and their lot shall be everlasting damnation!"

The negro groveled on the ground, but the other crouched over him still with menacing knife and muttered threats. Behind them the elephant swayed above the little image, now with black bulk showing clearly and now merging into the shadows of the trees as the moonlight waxed and waned.

"Won't work," murmured Adair, "the big fellow doesn't scare worth a cent. What'll I do next?"

That question was not left to him to answer. Suddenly a cold, hard, round object was pressed against the back of his neck and a soft voice whispered in his ear:

"You wantee makee die? Wantee catchee plenty bullet? No? All lite. You stay plenty quite. Sabe?"

Adair understood. He kept "plenty quite" while his hands were tied behind his back and his ankles were bound together. He still remained quiet when a gag was thrust into his mouth and tied there.

"You makee plitty goo' talk," went on the soft voice as its owner's hands deftly bound Adair. "Welly fine god. All lite. I much oblige."

The Chinaman departed, leaving Adair in the idol and unable to get out without falling out. But Adair had seen what his captor had not—that one of the folds of the bronze god's drapery made a sharp edge inside, and against this he began to fray the cord that bound his hands as soon as he was alone.

Watching through the eyes of the statue, Adair saw his captor emerge from the rhododendrons and recognized him as Charley Sing, the friend of the bibulous young Chapin. Charley advanced towards the two men, blithely twirling a straight walking stick as he stepped jauntily along.

"Pretty soft for Charley," thought Adair. "Must have dropped in to do a little investigating on his own account and finds the job all done for him."

The advent of the Chinaman had a re-

markable effect on the Negro. It was apparent that he was immensely relieved and no doubt he considered Charley Sing as responsible for the terrifying behavior of the idol which was now dark and silent. Erect and scowling, the Negro waited with his companion for the debonair Chinaman.

Of the conversation that followed Adair could hear little, but it was plain that Charley Sing was talking persuasively about the little god towards which he pointed several times with his cane. It was also clear that his audience was very hostile to his sentiments. Finally things came to a crisis and the Negro and his companion separated suddenly and circled until they were on opposite sides of Charley Sing. That bland and smiling Oriental seemed wholly unperturbed.

Suddenly the Indian, his knife flashing, dashed at the intruder. Charley swung up his walking stick, there was an explosive "Phut!" and the Indian whirled, dropped his knife and lay on the grass clutching at his shoulder. Charley turned swiftly and leveled the cane at the advancing Negro. The black man stopped in sullen hesitation and then retreated before the politely grinning Celestial.

Adair, remembering his first experience upon entering the grounds, guessed what was coming. As Charley Sing advanced confidently towards the elephant the wounded man spoke sharply. Instantly the huge beast lurched forward. Charley's cane "Phut-phutted" twice with no more effect than a bean shooter would have had. Then he turned to run, but not in time to escape the mighty trunk. High in the air he was swept and then hurled like a shell squarely into the center of the pond where he landed with a tremendous splash. His cane was caught up next and slammed into the shrubbery near Adair. Then the tusker soberly returned and resumed guard over the diminutive idol with the attractive green eyes.

A completely subdued and battered Chinaman crawled weakly from the water and disappeared swiftly into the shadows of the trees. Adair at that moment freed his hands, tore away the gag and with his knife quickly loosed his feet.

"Just in time, old man," he murmured, "it's your move again."

For the wounded man gave another command and the elephant, obeying hesitatingly, lifted the little god and deposited it in the howdah on his back. Then the men started away, the Indian supported by the Negro, and the tusker following. Adair seized his umbrella, slipped through the rhododendrons and sped away up the lilac bordered path. He reached the gateway and softly closed the big iron gates. Then he took the short piece of padlock chain that dangled from one and with it tied the two gates together so that it would mean a few minutes work to unfasten them. Next he jumped for a limb and drew himself up into the beech that spread above the driveway. He crawled out on a thick branch and sat cross-legged at its fork. He was directly over the middle of the driveway and was wholly immersed in leaves and shadow.

Through the checkered light and shade came the elephant and the turbaned men. They caught sight of the unexpectedly closed gates and checking the beast instantly, stood long in silence, listening and peering about them on all sides. Reassured by the sight of the other elephant still swaying peacefully under the tree where they had left it, they came softly on and were joined by that animal on the way. Then, as Adair had expected, they stood at the gates while the Negro worked to unfasten them under the impatient direction of the wounded man. Directly back of them and below Adair was the howdah of the tusker.

Adair reached downward with his umbrella, hooked the little god neatly about the neck and drew it up to him. Then with his pocket-knife he attacked the setting of the luminous green eyes. Luck was with him; the cement was soft, and he quickly pried out the stones and dropped them into his waistcoat pocket. Gently he replaced the idol in the howdah. The stiff southwest breeze bore his scent from the elephant as it had done while he was in the idol and the heavy rustling of the foliage concealed any sound that he made.

When the men had unfastened the gates

they stood a long minute looking up and down the deserted avenue. At last they stepped boldly out and, with the beasts following, set forth away from the city. Adair dropped from the tree and watched them from behind a gatepost. They had gone but a few rods when they halted and the Indian ascended into the howdah of the tusker, although the beast displayed some reluctance to have him do so. Adair saw the man stoop, pick up the little white idol and then with a sharp cry stand gazing at it in apparent bewilderment. Next the Indian turned swiftly to look into the howdah of the smaller elephant. A hot colloquy between the two men followed the discovery that it was empty.

They were plainly in the toils of indecision. Once the elephants were faced back towards the gateway, but the Negro, holding back, pointed to the flush of dawn in the east and jabbered vehemently. Finally the Indian sullenly swung the animals about again and the party set forward as it had started. But after a few steps the Indian stood up, whirled the idol about his head and flung it over the fence of the Chapin estate where it crashed among the bushes. Adair smiled grimly.

"I thought our dark-skinned brother didn't have any right to that god when the elephant refused to let him near it," he said. "It wasn't religious interest that brought him here after it, that's sure. I wouldn't have interfered if it had been, for I don't believe Chapin ever knew he had that curio. Too bad to take the old elephant's god away from him, though. Wonder where they would have dropped me if they'd found me asleep in that howdah as they expected? First bridge over the river, like as not."

He ran along inside the fence and picked up the idol. With a handful of wet earth he stuck the gems back in the eye sockets. Then, returning, he tried to rouse young Chapin, but could not. With considerable groaning he packed the unconscious man to the house sleeping in the moonlight. He propped him against the door, rang the bell violently, waited until he heard somebody coming and then disappeared.

"Here's where I get even with the old man," he chuckled. "I've given him a puzzle he'll fret over the rest of his life. And what a peculiar morning after young Horace will have!"

Down by the pond Adair searched until he found the Chinaman's cane. It was of metal and heavy. After a minutes's experimenting he learned how to take it apart and, as he had expected, found that it was a powerful air-gun. Using it as a cane he started for home. For a mile he was the only passenger in the trolley; then Charley Sing, wet and sick, came aboard.

"'Morning, Charley," said Adair pleasantly. "You're out early."

"All same you," urbanely returned the Chinaman. They discussed the weather.

"By the way, Charley," said Adair, "here's a curious cane I picked up. Seems to be a gun. Don't believe I want it—it's a concealed weapon. So I guess I'll just chuck it overboard." As the car thundered out on a bridge across the river, Adair tossed the walking stick through the steel work and it fell into fifty feet of water.

"Welly goo'," said Charley gravely. They talked over the progress of the Baptist Chinese mission the rest of the way.

The next day Adair ran across the following short item in an exchange from the neighboring city of Haverford:

"The sacred elephants of India that were booked to do the latest dances at the Liberty theatre this evening will be unable to appear and have been shipped back to New York owing to a sudden illness that befell their trainer while he was bringing the animals to this city from Paris last night."

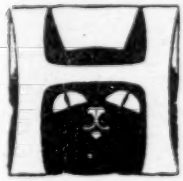
Adair put down the paper and grinned contentedly.

"The story of that same illness would make the most interesting scoop this sheet ever had," he murmured, "but it isn't going to get it. That story is my personal property. And I guess none of the other participants will give it away." He picked up his pencil and very cheerfully attacked the latest atrocity the cub had turned in under the delusion that it was a news story.

THE CREDITORS' MEETING

By E. A. KIRKWOOD

Hammel's financial condition is most depressing. Summed up, it is: liabilities $25, assets none. Then, there is the mental strain, about eighty pounds pressure. He feels that he will soon be in the class with those who are ever "promising to pay to-morrow, and dying to-day insolvent."



AMMEL was within a few yards of the hotel entrance when, with a quick, indrawn breath, he came to an abrupt halt. Then he side-stepped suddenly and darted into the doorway of a shoe store. There, keeping his back to the sidewalk as much as possible, he pretended to be interested in the window display, until the elusive reflection in the glass told him that Smithson had passed without seeing him.

Ordinarily he would have hailed Smithson's appearance with hilarious surprise, but just now he was neither surprised nor hilarious. He owed Smithson two dollars and he had promised to pay him two weeks before. Also, he was certain that the man had come that way purposely, hoping to meet him, for he knew that Smithson lived in the opposite direction, and at that hour he should have been returning home from work.

He waited for a moment, breathlessly afraid that his creditor would retrace his steps; and then, after a cautious peek to assure himself that the coast was clear, he made a quick dash for the hotel, swinging the door shut behind him with a sigh of relief.

When his thoughts were diverted by the near-meeting with Smithson he had been busily framing an airy little speech by means of which he hoped to convince his landlord that no harm would result in allowing him to disregard the "strictly in advance" sign over the desk; and as he did not really look for any trouble from that quarter, he approached the desk jauntily once safely within the lobby.

The landlord himself was there, reading an evening paper, and as Hammel approached he laid it aside and rose.

"Evenin', Mr. Hammel," he greeted jovially; and before the guest could answer he continued: "A gentleman called to see you 'bout"—he glanced at the clock—"'bout ten minutes ago. Left his name," he added, turning from the desk and inserting a thumb and forefinger into a pigeon-hole bearing Hammel's room number.

Hammel gasped again. No wonder he had met Smithson out there! The fellow had been at the hotel looking for him.

In the meantime the landlord fished a card from the pigeon-hole, and after squinting at it to make sure that there was no mistake, slid it across to Hammel. Hammel picked it up and glanced at it, and for the third time in as many minutes he gasped in surprised consternation. Scrawled in pencil across the face of the card he read:

"Ham—Want to see you. Will call later.

John Hulton."

John Hulton! Then, after all, Smithson had merely passed by. But it meant that there were two of them after him; and he would have much rather known that it was Smithson who called, for while Smithson's claim was a week older than Hulton's, the former would be satisfied with two dollars. The latter wanted ten!

Without waiting to explain about the deferred room rent, he dashed up the stairs; and in the seclusion of his room he washed hurriedly and scrambled into his best suit. While he dressed he considered a dozen wild schemes, but the only thing which seemed clear was that he must get away before Hulton returned. He had no

intention of facing him. He had failed to make good his promise, and now he had neither the cash to meet the obligation nor an explanation to offer.

Hammel was just an ordinary young fellow, with nothing but mediocrity in his past or in his future. As a boy he attended grammar school as long as he saw fit, which was not long. After he entered his teens he recognized no home in particular, and by the time he attained his majority, he had none at all; yet contact with the great world failed to broaden him except in one or two respects: he was wedded to no trade or profession, and his record of endurance at one job stood at eleven months. Otherwise he was born to be narrow, and narrow he was.

How he lived did not puzzle him, for he was not given to puzzling. He never earned more than three dollars in any one day in his life, and constant shifting from one job to another rendered that meagre income uncertain, to say the least; yet he was conscientious and held to a well-defined code of morals, in which debt loomed as a thing beyond the pale. Debt, protracted debt, stood for all that was despicable and mean. And by dint of an unfailing habit of getting another job immediately after quitting the one before, he maintained a precarious respectability until after he passed his thirty-first milestone.

His mode of living was simple in the extreme. Sometimes he boarded, but more often he occupied a room in a near-down-town "hotel," which privilege cost from two and a half to three dollars a week; and the six working days of that period he punctuated with three meals, purchased in the nearest restaurant where meals were to be had for an average daily expenditure of seventy-five cents. He also observed the early-to-bed-early-to-rise rule religiously, except that Saturday night and Sunday were likely to witness a departure from these staid habits.

Saturday evening, after bathing, shaving, and supping—he dined at noon—he sallied forth, arrayed in his best, to see the bright lights. To be sure, he saw most of their splendor from the sidewalk; but he sometimes occupied a fifty-cent seat at a vaudeville show, and afterwards visited the rendezvous of his acquaintances. There, on occasion, he splurged to the extent of two or three dollars, which amount divided itself about equally between pool and beer.

Having retired four hours later than usual, he slept correspondingly late Sunday morning and breakfasted at an hour when he would have been thinking of dinner had it not been Sunday. That to him was a delightful sensation, and one which he would not have missed for a great deal; and in consequence he ate but twice on Sunday. The second meal, staged almost at supper-time, was an elaborate affair, sometimes costing as much as seventy-five cents, or even a dollar. Afterwards he put aside the "makin's" in favor of a cigar, and often played a few hands of pedro or whist with the denizens of the hotel reading-room.

When his best suit, or any other article of his dress-parade outfit, began to show signs of wear, he amused himself less until he bought another to replace it. Thus he lived, and thus he might have gone on forever, had it not been for the intervention of the unforeseen.

One Saturday night, having become tired of his job, he left it without regret, jingling a week's wages, plus eighty-five cents miraculously saved from the week before, in his pocket. Saturday night was Saturday night, and Sunday was Sunday. He lived accordingly.

On Monday he rose at his usual hour and went out in search of another job. Tuesday he did the same and Wednesday, too. Then the remaining days of the week slipped by and he realized that Saturday had arrived surreptitiously. He was still out of a job.

Somewhat provoked, he took stock of his assets and discovered that he owned exactly three dollars and ninety-seven cents, hardly more than would pay for his room. But he had occupied that same room for many weeks and always paid on the dot, so he paused on his way up stairs and explained to the landlord, who smiled generously and said, "Don't worry."

After supper Hammel wandered about

the streets where the bright lights glowed, but he wandered aimlessly and economically. The vaudeville theatre and the rendezvous he shunned altogether; and on Sunday he slept late, as usual, but his dinner lacked elaborateness.

He rose half an hour earlier Monday morning and went out with the fire of determination burning in his veins, but to no purpose. Jobs were elusive; such as he located were either beyond his limited accomplishments, or he arrived just too late. Tuesday passed with the same result; and then he began to believe that his god of luck had died or gone on a vacation, and another, with whom he had no speaking acquaintance, had usurped his place. On Wednesday he rose earlier still and went out doggedly; but when evening came he was still among the ranks of the unemployed, and he lacked the twenty-five cents necessary to supply his supper.

He did not attempt to wrest credit from the restaurant. A sign over the cashier's desk warned the public that such attempts could be attended only by failure. Instead he strolled along a certain street, whistling but worried, until he met a man who he knew would pass that way, and from him he borrowed two dollars "until Saturday."

He had, at rare intervals, borrowed before, and to say "until Saturday" came natural because he had always said it. When his friends came to him for a like favor they always said it. And, curiously enough, he had always paid promptly when Saturday came, and his friends had, too. But the two dollars dwindled and Saturday came, and he was still out of work.

He could not understand it. It had never happened before. And, hating to again face his landlord with empty pockets, he held communion with himself and resolved upon a bold stroke. He carefully avoided Smithson, from whom he had borrowed on Wednesday, and hunted up Hulton, whose job might easily have been classed as a "position," and from him he borrowed ten dollars! He promised to pay the following Saturday.

Having paid the rent for the week before, and another in advance, he carefully husbanded the remaining four dollars, making them carry him until near the end of the week; but eventually he found himself broke and no nearer a job than before. With a sickly feeling he hunted up Vickers, whom he had known since boyhood, and borrowed five dollars for an indefinite period. He did not promise to pay at any specified time because he was already worried about one payment deferred and another which only a miracle would prevent him from deferring. Besides, Vickers worked in a bank, and that, coupled with their long acquaintance, represented to his mind a state of affluence and intimacy above fixed dates.

Saturday evening he wandered home with a little more than three dollars in his pocket and a feeling that he would never get a job. He paid the three dollars to the landlord and went back to his boyhood friend with a heavy heart. After considerable beating about the bush he confessed as much of the truth about his financial condition as he thought Vickers should know, and negotiated another indefinite loan of five dollars.

His gloomy presentiments seemed to be justified. Another week dragged by, relentlessly, day after day, until another Saturday witnessed his home-coming, weary-legged, half-hungry, and discouraged, and because he was half-hungry, still possessing almost two dollars.

That, however, was small consolation. Once more he must put off the landlord, and that, added to his other debts, made a total of twenty-five dollars. He could not possibly square himself with the world in less than three weeks, and he could do it within that time only by obtaining work the first thing Monday morning and living with the utmost stringency. And, in the face of disappointment after disappointment, obtaining work seemed no easy task.

Since the beginning of the week he had become more and more hopeless. His obligations seemed monstrous. He had a feeling that he was facing inevitable ruin, like a man coasting toward a stone wall, with his brakes useless and his steering gear jammed. His feet dragged and his shoulders drooped. His face wore a haunted expression. Twenty-five dollars was a

terrible sum. It was more than he had owned at one time in years. Even when he saved up for a suit, fifteen to eighteen dollars sufficed. And to have it hanging around his neck like a millstone!

It was Fate! He was doomed to be humiliated, scorned as a "beat," and perhaps cast into jail for debt. He was not sure about the law on that point, but he had read of such things. He could imagine his creditors holding a meeting to decide their attitude toward him; and it was while he was in that state of mind that he saw Smithson approaching him on the street. A moment later, when he learned that Hulton had been at the hotel looking for him, he knew that the thing he dreaded had come—the creditors' meeting!

He knew that at best he could avoid Hulton for only a short time. The man had a reputation for never doing things by halves, and he would haunt the place after that. At last he decided to go out and stay out until late, when he would return, tell the landlord that he was called away, pay for one night's lodging, and move the first thing in the morning.

To be sure, he had but little money, but there was yet one man to whom he could apply for a loan; and that man knew neither Smithson nor Hulton nor Vickers. Then he would get a job, if he was forced to knock some luckless incumbent on the head to create a vacancy, and bury himself until he was in a position to liquidate his debts. Of course he could say, when he had the money to pay over, that he had been working in the country, or something of the sort.

Dressed, he ran down stairs quickly, intending to pass the desk as if bent upon some errand of the utmost importance; but as he rounded the turn which brought him just above the lobby he drew back suddenly.

He was too late. Hulton was already there! Even as he dodged out of sight he saw the landlord press a button, which, by the medium of two peals of an electric bell, would announce in his room that a caller waited below.

He waited breathlessly while the landlord tried another summons, and then he heard him tell Hulton that Mr. Hammel was out.

"Has he been here since I called before?" Hulton asked.

"Oh, yes," the landlord returned. "I gave him th' card. I guess he went out to supper."

"I'll wait!" Hulton announced grimly.

Hammel groaned and cautiously retreated to the next landing. He tried to think, but coherent thought seemed an impossibility. It had come. He was trapped and he might as well face the music. True, he could return to his room, now that the bell had been rung without result; but suppose the landlord should think it possible that he had fallen asleep and go up to investigate? And the longer he delayed the more queer would it seem when he did go down.

At length, with a pitiful attempt at appearing nonchalant, he commenced his journey toward the inevitable. Twice he hesitated on the stairs, but he forced himself to go on. With a sigh he made the turn that brought the lobby within view and there below he saw Hulton, sitting bolt upright in a chair, with his back toward him and his face toward the door, nervously twiddling his thumbs. He descended another step, and the stair creaked. The landlord glanced up and saw him.

"Oh, Mr. Hammel!" he called. "Th' gentleman's waitin' for you. I thought you'd stepped out, for I rung twice and didn't get no answer."

At the sound of the name Hulton leaped to his feet. There was nothing to do now but go down and meet him and, putting on as bold a front as he could muster, Hammel went down.

Hulton met him with out-stretched hand.

"'Fraid I'd missed you, Hammel," he said, with a characteristic jerky laugh. "Wanted to speak to you. How's everything?"

"Well," Hammel began lamely; but Hulton plunged on:

"Fact is, Ham, I heard you was out of a job. Now, there's a pretty good one open down at the works and I know you can handle it, so I told the super I'd bring in a good man Monday morning. How about it, can you come?"

Hammel heard himself answer in a dream. Then he started to murmur something about the ten dollars.

"Tut!" said Hulton quickly. "I guessed all that. Happened to me more than once. Why didn't you come back, if you was stuck?"

A moment later, emerging from the hotel, they fairly collided with Smithson, dressed like a sore thumb, and beaming.

"Oh, Lord!" Hammel groaned to himself. "Half of the creditors' meeting came out all right, but here's the other half, camped on my trail!" However, there was no need to worry. He was again in funds, and he could satisfy Smithson easily.

The newcomer greeted both with a handshake and a slap on the back. "This where you fellers hang out?" he asked. "Funny, ain't it? We're neighbors now! You see, I got promoted to foreman last week and I changed my quarters to a locality more fittin' to my station in life. I'm at the "Middlesex" now, just in th' next block. To-night I'm goin' out to celebrate my first foreman's pay envelope. C'mon, everything's on me!"

Hulton declined and hurried away to his belated supper, and as soon as he was gone Hammel delved into his pocket and produced two dollars of his latest loan.

"Sorry I didn't get around to this before, Smithy," he said, "but you see—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Smithson, staring at the coins. "How th'— Oh, yes! But Hell! I'd plumb forgotten that!"

ANOTHER story for June: THE BISHOP OF THE STREET *by William Hamilton Osborne,* the pathetic story of a Broad Street financial strategist whose code of business ethics could have been written on the inside of a single-o capsule. One day, on the way to his office after lunch, he stops for a moment to hear a street preacher, after which he decides that gas attacks are all right for a common thug like the Kaiser to indulge in, but are not adapted to the refined and cultivated taste of a self-respecting American business man.

THE OTHER MAN'S CHANCE

By ROBERT E. HEWES

Mason has ninety-nine chances of losing and one chance of winning when he starts over the Moosetrack pass. And the other man's chance depends upon the success of Mason's battle with the elements on that most hazardous of northern trails.

IT had been four days since the mail carrier from Gold Field had brought southward with him a marvelous tale of a bonanza strike at Upper Yukon.

For three days Mason fought his way northward, always in the teeth of a howling gale that swept down from the great barren lands of the far artic regions. And each day the wind became the fiercer. It was a bad wind.

But always Mason kept to the trail that led farther into the frozen land from whence the wind came. For the call of that magic word—gold—was irresistible and it lured strong men far into the forbidding north.

It was the fourth day now that Mason had been on the trail, and before him he could see the great snow-capped ridge of the Nuklukayet divide reared austere and lonely against the sombre gray of the winter sky. Just the other side, Mason knew, was Old Jim Conley's road house, where he could have a brief respite of rest and warmth. It was the last vestige of civilization north of White Owl.

Swinging at the gee pole of his sled, Mason bent his head to the bite of the frost-filled wind and clasped a heavily mittened hand to his nose which was aching from the cold. He breathed through his mouth and the frozen air seemed to freeze his very lungs. The wind searched through his parka hood, and the frost of it crept into the flesh till it reached the marrow and chilled his blood.

Once, one of the dogs, a half-breed Spitzbergen-Sheperd newly from the south and less impervious to the cold than the others, shirked by slowing his pace and slackening the traces. The leader, a big Malamute, whirled upon him snarling savagely.

"Mush!" cried Mason, as he felt the tremor of the gee pole slack in his hands. "Mush, you Spitz, whey-e-e-e!" With a renewed gathering of their forces the dogs responded to his words, and, with Mason throwing his weight against the sled, mushed up the rising trail.

Half an hour it took Mason to fight his way across the ridge of the Nuklukayet divide, and a bitter half hour it was. The wind swept across the unprotected mountain top with the force of a demon unleashed. But on the far side Mason clung to the bouncing gee pole and dragged his feet to retard the racing sled which sped hard on the heels of the fleeing huskies.

In front of Old Jim's place at the bottom of the divide, Mason swung the end of the sled around with a shout and a great swirl of snow. The huskies, with the nimbleness of experience, sidestepped alertly. Mason left them to dig themselves into the snow and entered the road house.

"What do you do out in a wind like this?" queried Old Jim after greetings had been exchanged.

"Gold! man," replied Mason smiling as he pulled off his mittens and almost enveloped the stove with the hulk of his body. "Mushing for the strike at Upper Yukon," he added.

"Upper Yukon? Why Mason, you're three days behind the rush, the gang went through Tuesday!"

"That's bad!" Mason frowned. "I thought I was only two days behind. You see," he explained, "I was down the creek at the lower diggings when the news

reached Niva. I got the news half a day late and it took me a good day getting my duffle together. Then I lost a dog the first day and lost the day in the bargain going back for another!"

"You'll never make it," declared Old Jim, "you'll come in on the tail end of things!"

Mason frowned again. He knew what it meant finding all the worth while claims taken up and being forced to take the leavings, the claims on the outside edge. He had done it before.

"That's tough," Mason commented. "I was counting on doubling the pace and making up for two days, that's why I brought a double team of dogs. But with a three day lead on me, there's no chance of overtaking the gang!"

"No," sympathized Old Jim feelingly. "I'm sorry to see you left, Mason. You deserve your bit, you've worked hard enough for it!"

Suddenly Mason's face brightened.

"The Moosetrack pass!" he cried. "Jim, I'd forgotten that; I can take it and cut off three days, beat the gang by a day and get one of the first claims!"

Old Jim waved his hand toward the chimney in which the wind roared savagely.

"Hear that?" he said. "You can't take the pass in this wind; it's a bad wind, and it means a storm!"

"Storm!" cried Mason, "storm! What do I care for a storm? I tell you, Jim, I'll take the pass if all the sky turns to storm!"

Old Jim smiled, and his eyes were sympathetic.

"I know just how you feel, Mason," he said, "but gold isn't worth it, friend, gold isn't worth it. If you take the pass you've got ninety-nine chances of losing and one chance of winning; you know what it means to get caught in a storm in the pass, Mason?"

Mason sobered from his momentary excitement. Everybody in the country knew what it meant to get caught in a storm in the most hazardous of all northern passes, and there are many hazardous ones in Alaska.

"Yes, Jim," Mason said, "but it's not for myself that I want it, it's for my wife and little girl waiting back there in the States. Think man, they've been waiting five years for me to come back rich!"

"I know, Mason," spoke Old Jim quietly, "I had a wife who waited ten years, but she died last summer. I shall never go back now." He smiled a little sadly.

"Five years," repeated Mason slowly. "She isn't a little girl any longer though; she was fourteen when I left, now she's nineteen, almost a woman. Jim, it doesn't seem possible!"

Mason arose and began pulling on his mittens.

"You're not going to take the pass," protested Old Jim. "Remember, there's been more men than enough lost there in storms. You know this wind looks bad, or some of the gang would have taken the Moosetrack trail!"

Mason nodded, and Old Jim knew it was useless to remonstrate. He came to the door and watched as Mason routed the dogs from their warm snow holes. They submitted to the harness reluctantly, and shivered as the wind struck them. Mason saw, with firm lips, and drew his parka hood closer around his face. When a huskie shivers it is cold.

"Mush!" cried Mason, seizing the gee pole of the sled, "mush, boys, whey-e-e-e!" He turned and waved a mittened hand at Old Jim standing in the doorway of the road house.

Old Jim's eyes were serious, yet he knew that if he were in Mason's place and his wife were still alive, he would brave the dangers of the pass, too—for gold. But he was an old man now, and the long trails were ended for him.

The fight up the Yukon trail had been as child's play compared with what Mason was to experience in the wilderness of the Moosetrack pass. The trail was a tortuous affair, changing and uncertain. It led through an irregular break in the mountains, scarcely deserving of the name. And the wind! It roared down the pass between the mountain walls with tripled force, and it was tinged with the chill breath of the ice on Upper Yukon. It struck at Mason and strove to push him

back, like some giant, invisible hand. It sucked the very breath from his nostrils and mouth, till he had constantly to hold one hand before his face as a shield.

For the rest of that day Mason mushed on, steadily getting deeper into the mountains. By late afternoon he judged he had covered half the distance to Moosetrack Creek, where were located the old mining diggings that had brought about the opening of the trail into the mountains. From Moosetrack Creek the trail cut directly across the mountains into the Upper Yukon country. If he could reach the Creek by noon of the next day, Mason knew he could make the remainder of the trip in a day, and that end of the trail was easier. At that rate he would arrive at the strike a day before the gang of gold rushers who had followed the Yukon trail, which makes a wide half circle of a detour around the mountains the Moosetrack trail cuts through. It took four days by the Yukon trail to reach Upper Yukon and only two days by the pass.

That night Mason made camp on the leeward side of a mountain bank. He pitched his small tent and kindled a fire, over which he warmed beans and melted snow to brew tea.

Mason unharnessed the dogs and threw them their ration of frozen fish, which they promptly bolted and prepared to dig themselves into the snow for the night. But before they curled up, the big Malamute leader pointed his nose to the wind and howled, long and mournfully. The others whined in sympathy. Mason inside the tent listened, and frowned.

"Perhaps," he told himself uneasily, "Old Jim was right, it is a bad wind!"

When Mason awoke the next morning, the tent canvas was sagging downwards, as though under a heavy weight. He parted the flap and looked out on a world of snow. It was on the ground in great drifts and heaps. It was in the air, millions upon millions of flakes, filling the atmosphere with a mass of swirling whiteness.

Mason warmed and brewed tea, which he gulped hastily. He must travel hard to-day, he reflected, if he were to make Moosetrack Creek by noon in this storm.

The day before had been bad, but this day was worse. To the wind was added the snow. It was blown down from the mountain sides onto the trail, where it piled in great drifts. The dogs floundered helplessly in it, and Mason was forced to forge ahead and break a path. With the gee pole relieved of his weight the sled swerved and careened, taking the strength of the already straining huskies.

After an hour the wind changed. Instead of blowing straight on now, it broke and came from two points of the compass. The rival currents met and wrestled in the pass, till they seemed to blow from all directions at once. The wind would rush down the pass from behind and search up under the hair of the dogs. It would push at Mason savagely and then suddenly strike at him from the front, till he was robbed of his equilibrium and staggered in his walk.

There was sleet mixed with the storm and it formed a treacherous crust over the snow on the ground, retarding the dogs when their feet broke through. It drove through the air with the force of gunshot and stung the flesh cruelly. It was the kind of storm that had caused men to become lost in the pass. Flinging back an occasional word of encouragement to the huskies, Mason stumbled on through the white storm, exerting every ounce of his energy.

But it was slow work, forging through such an inferno of elements as now lashed out their fury upon the northland. And so noon found Mason still far from Moosetrack Creek. He was ravenously hungry and his whole body was crying out from thirst. But he could kindle no fire in this storm to warm food and melt snow. Twice he gathered up a handful of snow and gulped it, but it was as chalk dust to his dry mouth and he spat it out still unmoistened. Once he stopped long enough to loosen the lashings of the sled and throw each of the dogs a fish, and the short respite from exertion caused his sweat-soaked clothes to freeze in armor-like stiffness.

Gradually Mason felt his strength commence to weaken under the strain. And

with the feeling there came to his mind a realization that he was losing the fight. Men had perished in even less severe storms than the one which now reigned in the pass like a fury unleashed.

The thought terrified Mason, and he stumbled on through the storm with a reawakening of his dulling sensibilities. There flashed through his mind a mental picture of his wife and little girl who waited back there in the States. But she wasn't a little girl any longer, he reminded himself. She was nineteen, a woman almost old enough to be married! He smiled at the thought, a woman, almost old enough to be married. And when he had left she had been a girl in short dresses. He tried to think of her as a woman, but he could not realize it. In his thoughts she remained the little girl of five years before.

It was the picture of his dearest ones in his mind which gave Mason the strength to forge on through the storm. They seemed to be out there in front of him somewhere, beckoning him on with smiling faces. But there was a mistiness in their eyes, and their arms were clasped around each other tightly. It was the picture of them as Mason had last seen them, standing on the railway station platform as his train drew out carrying him toward the north.

"Five years!" Mason turned the words over in his mind. "Five years, they had been waiting, and he mustn't fail them!" He found himself wondering vaguely why his body insisted upon weakening when the happiness of his wife and daughter was at stake.

Once Mason's knees grew weak and he stumbled, plunging headlong into the snow. He staggered to his feet gasping.

"Old Jim was right!" he muttered, "it is a bad wind!"

Then suddenly there flashed through Mason's mind other words Old Jim had spoken. "Ninety-nine chances of losing, and one chance of winning." Old Jim had said so.

"One chance of winning!" The words danced before Mason's eyes, emblazoned in glittering letters. The wind seemed to be shrieking them in a thousand voices, hurling them at him from all sides. The words burned themselves into his brain and took their place besides the picture of his wife and little girl who beckoned him on. They seemed to be crying the words to him now.

The snow had obliterated all traces of the trail and the white storm made the mountain peaks invisible. Mason tried to look before him, but the wind blinded him and filled his eyes with water. He could not see where his footsteps were leading him, but stumbled on through the storm guided by blind instinct alone. Then he felt the trail dropping beneath his feet and knew he was on the decline that leads to Moosetrack Creek.

"One chance of winning!" he shouted back at the snow-encrusted dogs. "Mush! —one cha—"

Dimly he saw the door of the old store shack at Moosetrack diggings looming before him through the white storm, and he had scarcely strength enough to stumble to it.

Inside the shack Mason found a stove. He did not stop to consider why it should be there, he realized only that it was there. It had fire in it, but was burned to a mass of blackening embers, and the stove was rapidly cooling. Mason seized several sticks of wood from a pile on the floor and shoved them into the stove, which was one of the rapid-heating, sheet iron kind, and it was soon roaring hot. The heat restored Mason's faculties somewhat, and remembering the dogs he went out and unharnessed them, then threw them their ration of fish. Scooping up a kettle full of snow, he seized his grub sack and returned to the shack.

Inside Mason mechanically melted the snow over the stove and threw into it a handful of tea. He hacked off a hunk of beans from his frozen supply, and putting them in a skillet placed it on the stove. Then everything went black and he ceased to know.

When Mason recovered consciousness, he pulled himself to his feet dazedly. He smelled something and looked at the stove. He snatched the skillet of smoking beans from the stove and hungrily devoured the

burnt mass. The boiling tea scalded his mouth, and carrying the kettle to the door he scooped some snow into it. He swallowed great draughts of the strong brew.

The still hot tea stimulated Mason's whole system, it sent the blood coursing through his veins and restored the warmth to his body. It had the same effect on his clouded mind as a ray of sunlight on a dark day. He saw everything with a cleared vision.

First it flashed upon him as strange that the stove should be there. He had supposed the old shack deserted. He looked around the large room and started with a shock of surprise.

Lying on a cot in one corner of the room was a man. His features were darkened from the effect of frost, and his eyes were sunken. The pinched look on his face indicated that he had been suffering heavily. Apparently he was asleep.

Wonderingly, Mason stepped to the side of the cot and looked at the man more closely. He was young, and although he wore the garb of a miner, it was evident that he had not been long in the country.

Mason quickly seized the kettle of tea from the stove and shook the man gently, then saw that he was unconscious. Dragging the cot closer to the stove, Mason removed the man's boots and part of his clothing and examined his body for signs of injury. He found a great bruise which extended the entire length of the left side, evidently the result of a fall. The puffed condition indicated that the man had received internal injuries. Mason made him as comfortable as possible, and chaffed his wrists.

After half an hour the man opened his eyes and stared at Mason vaguely. Mason raised his head and placed the tea kettle to his lips. The stranger choked at the first swallow, then drank eagerly. A faint color came to his cheeks and he looked at Mason with a brightening light in his eyes.

"Where did you find me?" he whispered, after several attempts to speak.

"Here," replied Mason.

"Oh!" exclaimed the other, "I remember now, I dragged myself here when I came to after I fell. I was stunned for a while."

"Where did you fall?" asked Mason.

"Off the ledge down at the old Creek diggings," replied the other; "the dirt gave away. But," he asked, looking at Mason curiously, "where did you come from?"

"I was crossing the pass to Upper Yukon," explained Mason, "and I stopped here for the night; there's a gold strike at Upper Yukon."

"Gold!" cried the man excitedly, as though suddenly remembering, "gold! Why man, I've got thousands of dollars worth of it. I've found it, after months of searching. "Say," he turned to Mason with shining eyes, "now I can go back to the girl who's waiting in the States. Look there!" He raised himself from the cot in his eagerness and pointed to a small leather sack lying in one corner of the room.

Mason picked the sack up curiously. He grew interested as he felt its weight, and when he opened it he whistled in surprise. It contained some of the richest pay dirt he had ever seen.

"Where did you get that?" he cried.

"I told you so!" cried the other triumphantly. "I got it down at the lower diggings. I've got the claim staked, and it's worth thousands, man! It's a pocket strike, all in one claim, an—"

A sudden pain convulsed the stranger's features, and with a choked cry he sank back into unconsciousness.

Mason worked over the man long, but his efforts to bring him back to consciousness were fruitless.

"What he needs," Mason reflected, "is a doctor, and that bad!"

Mason sat down on a stool by the stove and reflected. If the man were only at Old Jim's place, the doctor from White Owl could be sent for in a hurry. But the only way to get the stranger there was to take him.

The full import of the situation presented itself before Mason with forceful clearness. He had had his fight with the storm, conquered the one chance Old Jim had allowed him, and now he could make the dash to Upper Yukon in a day. It was all down hill sledding, and he would arrive

at the strike with the first of the gold rushers. That would mean wealth, and happiness for the wife and girl who had been waiting for five years. Also, it would mean leaving the man here in the shack. He could come back for the stranger after he had staked his claim, Mason reflected hopefully, and then take him to Old Jim's.

But there was a sinister truth Mason could not get away from, and it sank the deeper as he watched the man's face. He would be dead!

Why not take the man on to Upper Yukon with him? The extra weight would delay him only half a day, and the gold rushers on the Yukon trail would be delayed as much by the storm. But he knew there was no doctor at Upper Yukon. There was only one chance of saving the man's life, he had to admit to himself finally, and that was to get him to Old Jim's place and the doctor by the next night.

And there was only one chance of winning wealth and happiness for his wife and little girl. That was to make Upper Yukon to-morrow.

All that night Mason tossed in a torment of mind. Toward morning he fell into a fitful sleep, and he dreamed he had gone to Upper Yukon and staked one of the richest claims in Alaska. He returned to the shack on Moosetrack Creek, to find the man cold and still. Mason awoke sweating, and the early dawn of the next day found him mushing his dogs on the back trail toward Old Jim's place with a human burden lashed to his sled.

When the doctor from White Owl arrived at Old Jim Conley's road house on the Yukon trail in response to a hurry call, he found a lot of work awaiting him.

The young man was near being past help of an earthly physician. He had bad internal injuries, the doctor said, and he had only one chance of living. But if he could win that chance he would be as well as ever.

Mason had a frost-bitten face, frozen feet, and a chill, contracted in his superhuman effort in fighting his way back through the Moosetrack pass. But he had won his fight with the storm a second time, and it was his winning that had saved the other man's life.

The stranger opened his eyes to look at his savior lying near him. A flash of recognition came to his eyes.

"Where are we now?" he asked.

"At Old Jim Conley's," replied Mason, smiling.

"And you brought me here!" The stranger's eyes rested on the other's bandaged feet. "You must have had a bitter time getting me here in that storm. I owe you my chance to make *her* happy!"

Mason saw the other seize his trousers which were on a chair beside his cot and draw a wallet from one of the pockets, then he drifted off into a heavy sleep.

When Mason opened his eyes again the stranger was asleep. The wallet lay where he had dropped it on the cot, and there was a small photograph beside it.

Mason reflected that the picture must be the "her" the stranger had referred to, and smiling absently he reached for the photograph. He was thinking of his own chance which had gone glimmering with his dream of wealth and happiness back there on the Moosetrack trail when he had given the other man his chance.

Mason glanced at the photograph, then a look of astonishment came into his eyes and a startled cry escaped his lips. He was looking at the picture of his little girl of five years before!

The other man, awakened by the cry, saw the look on Mason's face and the picture held in his trembling fingers. He stared at Mason keenly, and a light of half-credulous realization flashed over his own face.

"Say!" he cried eagerly, "are you Dave Mason?"

Mason smiled, and could only nod in reply.

"Glory be!" cried the other joyously, "I came north to win a fortune for my girl and her mother and to find her Daddy, and I've done it, I—I—" His voice choked with the emotion of his happiness and he turned to Mason with shining eyes.

But with a smile on his lips, Mason was gazing in silent wonder upon the vista of happiness that had opened before him, fruit of the other man's chance.

THE ILL WIND AND THE ASSESSORSHIP

By A. L. CRABB

A hustling mill superintendent, without an empty sleeve or a wooden leg among his political assets, tries to overturn tradition in a county where physically deficient men with great executive ability are as plentiful as in Washington D. C. in war time.

TRULY, it is an ill wind that does not blow good fortune in the general direction of someone. For instance, the incumbent of every assessorship in Barlow County during the past forty years has been blown into office by some form of physical infirmity. A candidate for Assessor in Barlow County does not run upon a platform that is pro or anti anything. He merely dangles an empty sleeve or exhibits a crutch before the sovereign voters of the county, and it is all over but the formalities. The cripples have not yet aspired to the various other offices of the county. They have been content to regard as their exclusive own the emoluments implied in the assessorship; and, with one exception, those sound of body and limb have followed a policy of hands off. For the other offices they have gone in teeth and nails. There are so many cards, and platforms, and eloquent appeals from the pie-hungry, that during the busy season the Barlow *Yeoman* often has to use the "To be continued." But that is separate and apart from the assessorship.

One morning, in the early pre-primary season, the following appeared in the columns of the *Yeoman* just below the elaborately posed photograph of the writer:

"To the Voters of Barlow County:

I have been a Democrat all my life and have never scratched the ticket of the party immortalized by the illustrious Thomas Jefferson. All of my ancestors were adherents of that party.

In 1893, while riding to the post office, I was thrown from a mule and my right arm so badly crushed as to necessitate amputating above the elbow. I have learned to write with my left hand, and can guarantee that all of the records of the office will be faithfully kept.

Thanking you, one and all, in behalf of my wife, my seven children, and myself, I subscribe myself,

Your obedient servant,
Elihu Speck."

" 'Lihu had better say 'in behalf of his family,' " observed a cynical female neighbor who read the announcement. "That trifling loafer oughtn't be elected anything, but I sure would like to see his wife and children dressed in some decent clothes for once."

" 'Lihu ain't no great hand at workin', " admitted her spouse, "but he's a pretty good kind of neighbor."

"How'd he ever show it, I'd like to know?"

"Well, you can always depend on him at settin' up with the sick."

"Yes, or anything else that ain't got nothin' to it but set around and jaw. Do you reckon he'll be elected?"

"Oh, of course." The response savored of the consciousness of the superiority of the masculine grasp of such matters. "The first cripple to announce for Assessor never has no opposition. The early bird catches the worm, as the feller said."

For several days immediately following his advent into the field, Elihu did little but receive congratulations. All men are so constituted as to bestow a certain respect upon those who contest in the political arena; and this respect approaches reverence whenever the contestant's success may be regarded as a sure thing. Neighbors who had regarded Elihu with poorly con-

cealed contempt for years now rode miles out of their way to shower their felicitations upon him. Elihu always responded with becoming modesty.

"No, the party don't owe me nothin', not a thing, although I've worked mighty hard for her success. I shall count it one of the greatest honors of my life to be one of its standard bearers in the county where I was borned in."

"Have you picked you out a deputy yet, 'Lihu?"

"I am making no promises," replied Elihu, with unwonted firmness.

Always is there something new under the sun. One morning, during the third week of Elihu's candidacy, the readers of the *Yeoman* were greeted like this:

"To the Democrats of the Grand Old County of Barlow:

I, the undersigned, beg to announce my candidacy for the Democratic nomination for Assessor. For thirty years I have served my party with no hope of personal reward at its hands until now.

On the very day that Grover Cleveland was inaugurated the first time, I accidently shot myself in the lower right limb, which had to be taken off. Notwithstanding this, every election day has found me at the polls working for my party and my country. It is my aim to make Barlow the best Assessor the old county ever had.

Your support is respectfully solicited.

Tim Diller."

Upon reading the announcement the morning it appeared, Bob Stiles ran his little roan pony two miles to be the first to break the news to Elihu. He won the coveted honor.

"Say," he yelled, checking his foam flecked steed in front of the Speck domicile, "heard the news?"

"No," answered Elihu, vaguely suspecting that a house had burned or some one had a new baby. "What is it?"

"Why, Tim Diller; he's come out."

"Come out? How? What do you mean?"

"Here it is. Read it for yourself," said this modern Job's comforter, passing the paper to Elihu. "And he'll get a lot of votes, too."

"Why, he can't run!" gasped the horrified Elihu. "He can't run. I come out first."

"We'll, maybe he can't, but he is."

"What shall I do?" inquired the stricken Elihu.

"One can't never tell about such things, but my advice is to get busy and stump the county. Speak at every store. Shake every hand. Kiss every baby. Don't leave a stone unturned, as the sayin' goes."

"I come out first," fatuously reiterated Elihu.

"That'll help out, but it won't get you the office by itself. You have got to hustle."

Elihu hustled. He opened his campaign at the Clear Fork school house the next Saturday afternoon. With pompous, high-flown phrases that creaked in the joints, he complimented his auditors upon the fact that they were residents of the land of the free and the home of the brave; where no one wore the ball and chain of the tyrant, or bowed the knee to the crowned monarch. Then, he got down to brass tacks. He was a candidate for the highest office within the bestowal of the finest constituency in the world. He aspired toward an office which for forty years had been outside the pale of vulgar rivalry, but whose high plane had been lowered by the action of a common horse jockey who in 1889 and 1907 had openly scratched the ticket. His, Elihu Speck's, record was clean. Look it over, gentlemen. Ask his neighbors if he had not always paid his debts. And, was it not true that in 1903 his opponent had cheated a widow woman out of her only cow, etc., etc.

On the same day, and at the same hour, Tim Diller sounded the keynote of his campaign at a barbecue at Boiling Springs. To begin with, Tim, in his best auctioneer style, made flattering references to the happy state of his hearers. They lived under the banner of freedom. They enjoyed blessings alien to the rest of the world. It was the inherent right of free men to vote for the candidates of their choice for any office whatsoever. Why should any office, controlled by the sovereign voters of the county, be constricted

by the lines of tradition? He was a candidate for the assessorship of Barlow County. His life was an open book. All of his days he had toiled that his family might have food and raiment. Had, within the memory of man, his opponent ever worked a day in his life? There were abundant details associated therewith; painful details, but suffice it to say that the office of Assessor would suffer greatly if confided to the slothful care of one Elihu Speck.

That started the campaign in earnest. Zealous partisans bore the words of each to the other, and such vigor was put into the contest that the scramble for other offices went into an eclipse.

"Well, Bill," one sovereign voter would hail another, "how do you stand for Assessor?"

"Don't I look like I'm in my right mind?" Bill would respond. "I'm one-legged, of course!"

"It's just throwin' your vote away. The one-armed vote 'll get five hundred majority."

Every convocation of loafers heard a bitter debate between the partisans of Tim and those of Elihu. One school argued vehemently that a man with only one arm needed the office far more than one with a leg lacking. Any common pony could furnish transportation and thus supply the deficit incurred by the missing leg, but what on earth or up in the skies could take the place of a departed upper limb. Besides, Tim had no right to run anyhow, since Elihu had come out first. Tim's adherents attempted to offset this with fine sarcasm. Could a man ride a horse into church when he wished to worship? Could he ride it into the dining room when he wished to eat? Could he ride it up and down a corn row when he wished to hoe? Besides, Tim would have come out first, himself, had his debut not been delayed by an attack of pleurisy.

Just here, the tangle was complicated further by this heavily leaded notice in the *Yeoman*:

"To the Voters of Barlow County:

I am a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Assessor. I have resigned my position as foreman in the Kister Planing Mill, and expect to put all of my energy into the prosecution of my campaign. I expect to be elected, inasmuch as I have no doubt that the intelligent voters of the county will welcome this opportunity to choose an Assessor who is sound both in body and mind.

Very sincerely,
Perry Tuppin."

Perry's intelligence was brought into question by several of his friends who held that no sane man would quit a fairly lucrative and congenial position to embark upon the muddy and uncertain waters of county politics.

"It's the chance of my lifetime," asserted Perry stoutly, "and I've got the sense to know it. Here these two hillbillies are scrapping like bloody murder, and the honest people are sick and tired of candidates riding into office on an empty sleeve or trousers leg. You just watch these shysters shrink when I get into action."

He got into action immediately. The promise to put all of his energy into the campaign was kept in full. There were prompt results. Political wiseacres all over the county noted a marked reaction in favor of Perry. Consternation seized upon Elihu and Tim. Elihu sent a letter posthaste to Tim, inviting him to a conference on matters of urgent importance. That night at eight, Tim's raucous "Hello" sounded at Elihu's front gate.

"Tim," said his host, "I'm going to do you a favor. You haven't got no show at all in this race; but if you'll get off and throw me your support I'll make you my deputy."

"Is that what you call a favor?" asked Tim sarcastically. "I'm going to stay in this here race till the cows bawl for home. But I'll make you this proposition, fair and square: if you will withdraw, and throw your votes to me, I'll give you that gray mare o' mine and make you my deputy besides. Now, say something or shut up."

Elihu shut up, and the fight went merrily

on. With remarkable speed Perry Tuppin covered ground in his Ford runabout, showering felicitations and greetings and shaking hands everywhere. He played his nerve as one of his strongest cards. He would drive into a village at high speed, proclaiming his advent by a series of discordant honk-honks. Bringing his car to a daring stop, he would wave jauntily to the natives on the store porch.

"Greetings, gentlemen," he would call. "I m Perry Tuppin. I guess you've heard of me. I am a candidate for Assessor. Do any of you know of any reason why I shouldn't be elected? If you do, gentlemen, speak right up. I want to know it if there is any good reason why I should be defeated, because, gentlemen, I believe that any office in Barlow County is too good for any man who isn't the best one available. You have a lovely country around here, gentlemen; your corn is the best I've seen. Who teaches your school? Ah, Claude Bowe. Fine young man. Best one for the place, I'm sure That's the thing that counts—the best man. Have cigars, gentlemen. Good-bye."

"I've always been a one-legged man," said one of the natives, "but I sorter like the way that feller talks."

"I promised to vote one-armed," replied another, "but I've a notion to go back on it. 'Lihu ain't fitten to be Assessor."

"No, nor Tim Diller, neither. The way they're fightin' each other makes me plumb sick of politics."

Some one mentioned Tim Diller's name one day in Perry's presence.

"Tim Diller, Tim Diller," said Perry. "He's dead, isn't he?"

"Why, no; what makes you think that?"

"Well," said Perry, in a voice loud enough for every one to hear, "I know every live one in the county, and I can't place anybody named Tim Diller."

One day, while campaigning in Elihu Speck's neighborhood, Perry, with crowning presumption, drove up and solicited Elihu's vote.

"I don't want the place unless I'm the right man for it," he continued, despite Elihu's frantic efforts to halt him. "Any office in Barlow County is too sacred to be held by any man who isn't the best one available. That's the thing to be considered —the best man."

"I'm candidate for Assessor, myself. Get out of here."

"You're a candidate? You? Well, you must excuse me. I hadn't heard it." And cranking his Ford, he drove on.

It happened that several of the sovereign voters of the county were sitting on the porch with Elihu at the time, and they found the story too good to keep. It traveled like wild fire, and many were the boisterous guffaws it occasioned.

"It's as good as settled," declared a political prophet who hadn't missed fire on an election in fifteen years. "The crippled ticket won't get a handful."

But the next morning, the readers of the *Yeoman* gasped anew at this:

"To My Fellow Democrats of Barlow County:

I have at last consented to announce myself as candidate for Assessor, subject to the action of the Democratic primary.

On the thirteenth of March, 1899, in cutting down a tree for a raccoon, I was injured so that my right arm and left leg had to be removed.

While barred from the usual channels of labor I feel that I am in no way incapacitated for the duties of the office which I seek. If elected, I will be placed in position to pay for my home, educate my children, and, at the same time, render efficient service to the good old county of Barlow.

Hoping to have your support,

Uriah Batterson."

Late that same afternoon, Perry Tuppin entered the office of the Kister Planing Mill.

"Mr. Kister," he said, "you said I could have my place back if I got licked. I've come to take it."

"You haven't been licked yet, have you?"

"No, but I'm getting off now so as to keep from being."

"What about Elihu and Tim?"

"Oh, they should worry. Uriah is going to make them his deputies."

AN IDYLL OF CAPE DE CASTRO

By LEROY WALLINGFORD

Tong Sue has a monopoly at Cape De Castro. One night he escapes a knife thrust directed toward the region of his fifth rib, and is convinced that monopolists are not exactly popular. He proceeds to combat the combined strength and cunning of four competitors.

IT was Tong Sue who first discovered gold at Cape De Castro. Tong was prowling up the coast towards Port Darwin, and the strip of white sand that ran like a lace insertion between the emerald waters and the stunted mangroves attracted him. Tong went ashore, washed a few buckets of the sand and then pulled his boat up on the beach. The find was exceptionally rich.

It is a peculiar fact that a discovery of gold, no matter how jealously the discoverer guards the secret, is carried in some unexplainable way to men miles away from the find. This has been proved a thousand times. It would seem that the very intensity with which the man on the spot prays that all others will keep away, has an effect that is diametrically opposite. Men suddenly feel a desire to take the trail that leads to the new Golconda, although that trail may have appeared hopeless only a few days previous, and they explain their arrival at the field by saying that "something" dragged them in that direction.

This mysterious "something" disturbed Tong Sue's solitude five days after he landed at Cape De Castro. A Japanese and a white man arrived from different points of the sunburned plain, and they made straight for the beach and pegged out claims. The Chinaman didn't speak. The old maxim which tells us that silence is golden was translated from the Chinese.

Next day another Jap drifted in from the gray northwest, and the following day brought another. Tong viewed the newcomers with impassive eyes, but he gave no welcomes. He washed industriously from early morn till the tropical twilight was smothered in the heavy night, and the little bag that hung round his neck grew heavier as the days passed.

Tong's silence welded the friendship that immediately sprang up between the four newcomers. They hated Tong and they liked each other through knowing of the common hate. They compared notes, talked and smoked together in the evenings and cursed the Chinaman every little while. But the hostile looks and the curses did not affect Tong. He dreamed rosy dreams of a maiden who lived far to the north in evil-smelling Hankow, and he twirled his dish merrily.

It was unlucky for the Chinaman that the new arrivals were not so fortunate as himself. His days had been exceptionally profitable, but he soon realized that his claim was the exception. He didn't question his neighbors regarding their luck; he discovered it by that peculiar power of intuition possessed by men who rely upon their eyes to collect information that is never whispered loud enough for their ears to hear.

On the fifth night after the arrival of the first strangers Tong was made still further cognizant of the envy of the four. His sleep was disturbed by a slight sound, and by amazing quickness he managed to twist his body in time to avoid the knife thrust. The incident disturbed him. The few hours that intervened between the happening and daylight he devoted to concentrated thought and the bandaging of an arm that had been slightly wounded when he attempted to hold the would-be assassin. It looked as if the quartet intended to make Cape De Castro too warm for the original pioneer.

Tong had no wish to evacuate hurriedly. He was an aggressive person if judged by Celestial standards, and each day's labor was making the little bag heavier. By daylight he had made up his mind to match his cunning against their strength.

That evening he crept into the bush towards a buffalo wallow a mile inland, and there performed the unpleasant work of bagging a portion of the carcass of a bull buffalo that had become bogged in the sticky mud some three weeks previous. The task was not agreeable, but Tong worked with much determination. The vision of the maiden in Hankow came up before his eyes and made him forget much. He dragged his load by a circuitous track to his boat that he had secreted in the mangroves, and then paddled out into the little bay that sheltered behind the long snaky strip of land that pointed up toward Sumatra. He anchored the boat by means of a heavy stone and a few fathoms of rope, and then, by the aid of a long pole, he suspended the bag containing the portion of the dead buffalo from the stern so that it hung some feet above the water. Quite satisfied with his work, he lit his pipe and made a comfortable couch for himself in the bottom of the boat.

The four on shore missed Tong early that evening. One of their number had wasted a considerable amount of time and patience in crawling silently to the spot where the Chinaman usually slept, and was much disgusted at finding that Tong Sue had changed quarters. His companions were also disgusted when he made his report. They made an extensive search of the beach, and towards midnight the moon, that peeped for an instant from behind the black clouds, enabled them to locate the boat in the middle of the little bay.

The four felt aggrieved. They looked upon the Chinaman's action as a personal insult. He had insinuated by his action that their company was not desirable, and they acted quickly to avenge the indignity. They drew lots between themselves, and five minutes afterwards two of the Japs placed their knives between their teeth, stepped out of their scanty clothing and waded into the water of the bay. The white man and the other Jap sat themselves down on the sand and waited.

An hour passed and the two who had swam out to expostulate with Tong had not returned. Three hours went by, yet no sounds came from the water. At last the white man, cursing softly, moved up the beach. The Jap followed slowly. It was plain to both that the gods had not been kind to the two swimmers.

Tong Sue did not come ashore next morning. He had examined the beach very early, and seeing only two of his visitors moving about he thought it advisable to stay on the water and rest. The Jap and the white man also rested. They sat on the beach and watched the little boat, punctuating long silences with strange curses. They wondered how Tong had disposed of their two friends. There were no firearms at Cape De Castro, and one has to be quick with a knife to deal with two visitors who make a surprise call. Sometimes the two on the beach wondered what was in the bag that Tong Sue had suspended from the stern of his boat.

"He will be sleepy to-night," remarked the white man, as the sun dipped towards the mangrove trees.

The Jap nodded and sharpened his knife on a smooth pebble.

"We'll get him sure," continued the white, and the other bared his yellow teeth in a smile of approval.

"Gettem good," he snapped. "They two damn fools last night. Never mind, much more for us." He thought of the Chinaman's gold and stroked his knife cunningly.

They relapsed into silence, sitting side by side till the thick night swept down from Asia and blotted out the little boat.

TONG Sue overslept himself the following morning. The sun was shining upon a deserted beach when he looked shorewards. He searched the shoreline patiently, but no one was visible. Then he glanced cunningly at the suspended bag of offal and the blue water beneath.

"Gettem all four!" he laughed softly. "Plentee good smell, plentee good shark. Damn fool not know!"

He tripped lightly to the stern and started to unfasten the rope that bound the end of the pole to the seat. Tong Sue's thoughts were far away at that moment. The little maiden at Hankow came up before his eyes, and he fingered the rope with clumsy fingers.

But it was a bad moment for day dreams. As Tong stepped across the pole, the untied end was suddenly jerked up by the weight hanging upon the other extremity, and he was thrown into the water.

A big "gray nurse" shark that had shepherded the buffalo meat for the preceding thirty-six hours, snapped the bag before it touched the surface of the water. Her traveling companion, a medium-sized "bull nose," attended to Tong Sue; and peace settled down upon the white beach of Cape De Castro.

The Black Cat Club

(*Continued from page 2*)

interesting from the start; the characters are well sketched and real; the author makes the crime of the deserter almost justifiable under the hard conditions, only to show its utter futility in the surprise twist at the end. It is a bit clumsy for the girl to invite Dew to her home when she knows the danger he might run. It is essential that he go there; but she should have warned him, and he should have gone in spite of the warning. One false note is struck when Dew says: "I think I have a plan which will save the regiment." This should be less outright, as the Southerner of good family is not a boaster. The idea of leading the regiment into battle under the flag of the Confederacy is novel, though it would seem more practicable if the men were of an earlier generation. It is doubtful if few besides Confederate veterans would recognize either the Confederate flag or the rebel yell. One must admit that this is both a pretty and thrilling conceit of the author. The ending shows the ironical working of fate, without entirely sacrificing the characters, and redeems the author's seeming condonement of the crime of the deserter.

The Hanging Basket displays the same fanciful style which the author employed in his story, *Beatty*, which was published last September. At times this style suffers from an overabundance of metaphor and ambiguous expression. The setting is delightfully, dreamily vague. The characters, also, are somewhat vague. Peter de Haas and his wife are naturally drawn, while Alberta is unnaturally mature for a child of twelve. Her attitude toward the disputes of her parents is unnatural; she seems to be an outsider, as it were, viewing the situation; and her conviction of a housewife's right to a lover is hardly a healthy philosophy for a twelve year old fledgling. There is a false lead in her repeated wish to live with Mr. Hartley and take violin lessons. Whether her insistence is a natural revolt against her utterly repulsive home life, or whether it is the outcropping of a nature prone to err, one can only guess. Hartley himself is a well drawn character, but not a necessary one. He is evidently introduced to afford the author an excuse for incorporating divers fugitive ideas that are supposed to enhance the style of the composition. A happy flash of humor lightens the ensuing tragedy in the spectacle of the gallant one bargaining with his lady for a quarter. The fatalistic attitude displayed in the last scene is an unobstrusive, human touch that cleverly links the past mentality of the dead man with that of his family.

The Head of Cromwell might well be termed an animated dissertation on Hamlet's speculations by the grave of poor Yorick, or a sort of Charlie Chaplin progress through Westminster Abbey. The first paragraph so grips the reader's curiosity that he merrily joins the chase just to see the speed cop get Oliver. The opening scene, with the sodden roisterer and bounding skull in the whirling storm, is vividly portrayed. Indeed, the entire construction is excellent. The atmosphere, diction, and dialect are ably managed; in reading it one is soon put at a chuckling ease by the sure touch of the author's workmanship. And there is a splendid whimsicality and a gay exuberance of fancy rarely met with in these sober days. But it is no more a short story than Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" is a novel. The tale is distinctive chiefly for its style and unique story germ, the origin of the latter suggested no doubt by the use of a skull as a tobacco jar. A tobacco-jar finish to such a rapid career is a bit disappointing. Yet what could be more utilitarian than a vicar's tobacco jar? And such a philosophical vicar! Why, even the author couldn't hook him, as witness his answer

when cornered: "My belief is modest, but my imagination stops at nothing."

While the influence of a musical note upon any substance which gives forth an equal number of vibrations is a well known fact, we must accept *The Skyscraper in B Flat* as an intentionally impossible story which is chiefly commendable for the clever suppression and clear, straightforward style. The ingenious method of the author to keep the reader guessing—the incident of the law suit and the suggestion that the Greenberger Brothers will seek revenge—is also worthy of comment. The last sentence makes an excellent ending and is the best character touch in the story.

The Fire Bug presents some characters who have appeared before in the pages of the Black Cat, and has a plot which is better in every respect than their previous vehicle, *An Outrage Or So*. The story is founded on a medical point which is not well taken, as a man with a clot on the brain would not be likely to be active. The author should have skated around the basic idea by attributing the fire bug's conduct to pressure due to his fall or unbalanced condition following brain fever. Then he would have made good. The climax of the story in the court scene is well done, although not portrayed precisely according to court procedure. Gertie Gilfoil's "system" is an innovation for conveying to the reader the offstage action of the story. Whether one is familiar with law work or not, he knows that Gertie is impossible in her situation, yet is prone to tuck away his literary scruples and take her for granted.

Members of the BLACK CAT CLUB are aware that all periodical publishers are facing a crisis in their affairs which demands immediate action on the part of magazine readers.

At the last session of Congress a War Revenue Bill was passed in which was incorporated a clause establishing a postal "zone" system for all magazines containing advertising and travelling second-class. This zone system will go into effect on July 1st. and, at the end of two years, will have increased the cost of magazine reading from twenty to more than eighty per cent. This is intended to be permanent postal legislation and is a war tax in name only; publishers are already paying a war tax through excess profits and increased income taxes. To meet this new increase, publishers will have to boost their subscription rates, which will have the effect of decreasing circulations to an extent that will work serious injury to the publishing industry and deprive those who are remotely situated from publishing centers of magazines which they now buy at a rate that does not vary in any section of the country.

Publishers and members of the Authors' League are asking all clubs and associations to adopt resolutions demanding the repeal of this destructive law. We do not think that we are asking too much when we request you to register a protest with your Congressman.

The eighteenth contest comprises the stories in this issue, (May); and all lists must be received at the office of the BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before June 10th. Prizes will be awarded June 15th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the August BLACK CAT; issued July 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

A PRIZE of $10 will be awarded to the member sending in the best criticism.

A PRIZE of $5 will be awarded to the member sending in the next best criticism.

PRIZES of $2.50 EACH will be awarded to members whose criticisms rank third and fourth in the contest.

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